Isaac ASIMOV'S®

SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE

$1.50 UK £1.20

JANUARY 18, 1982

AQUILA

Somtow Sucharitkul

Robert Silverberg

Vernor Vinge

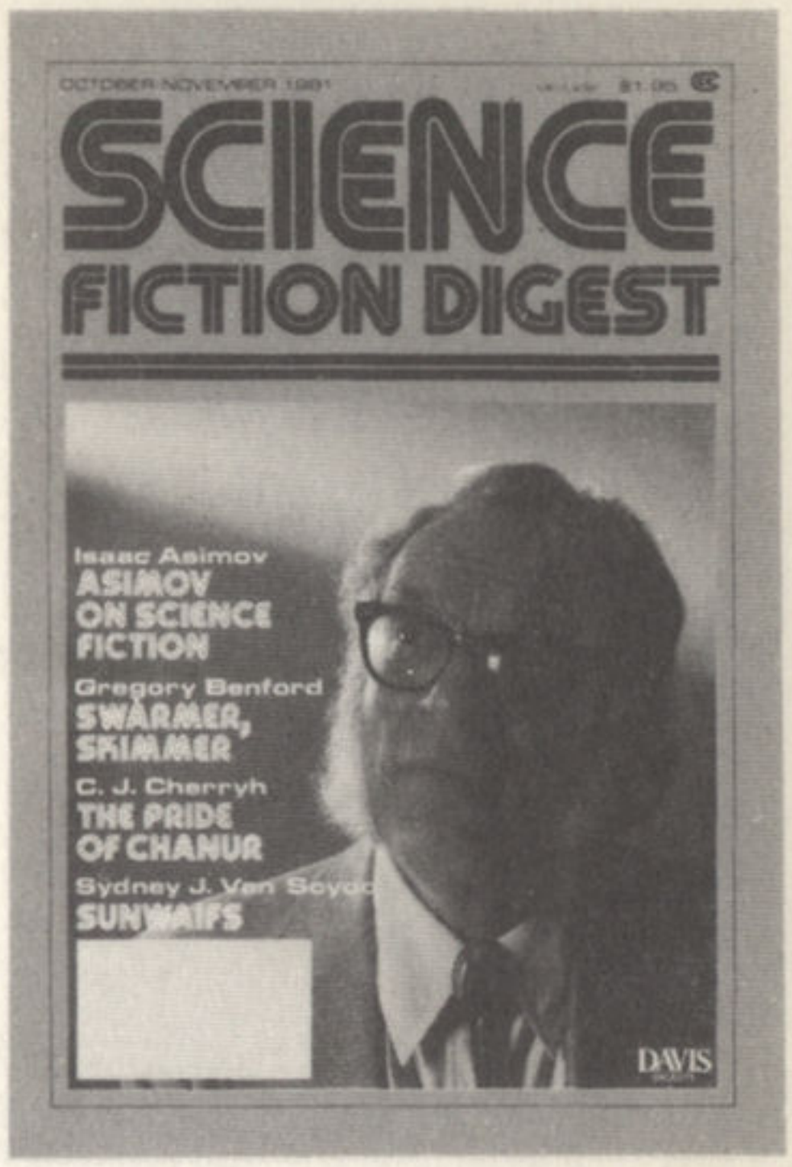
Gene Wolfe

0 71486 0

DAVIS DIGESTS

NEW THIS FALL!

The Best of the New Books



Yours for just $7.97 with a CHARTER SUBSCRIPTION to

SCIENCE FICTION DIGEST

It's where you'll find top-flight condensations of the best of the newly published, and about to be published, novels of science fiction, fantasy, horror, the occult and futurism. Featuring major new works by the best-known names in their fields. Including some books still in progress!

First Issue on Sale Now! with

ISAAC ASIMOV
Asimov on Science Fiction

C.J. CHERRYH
The Pride of Chanur

GREGORY BENFORD
Swarmer, Skimmer, excerpted from Across the Sea of Suns

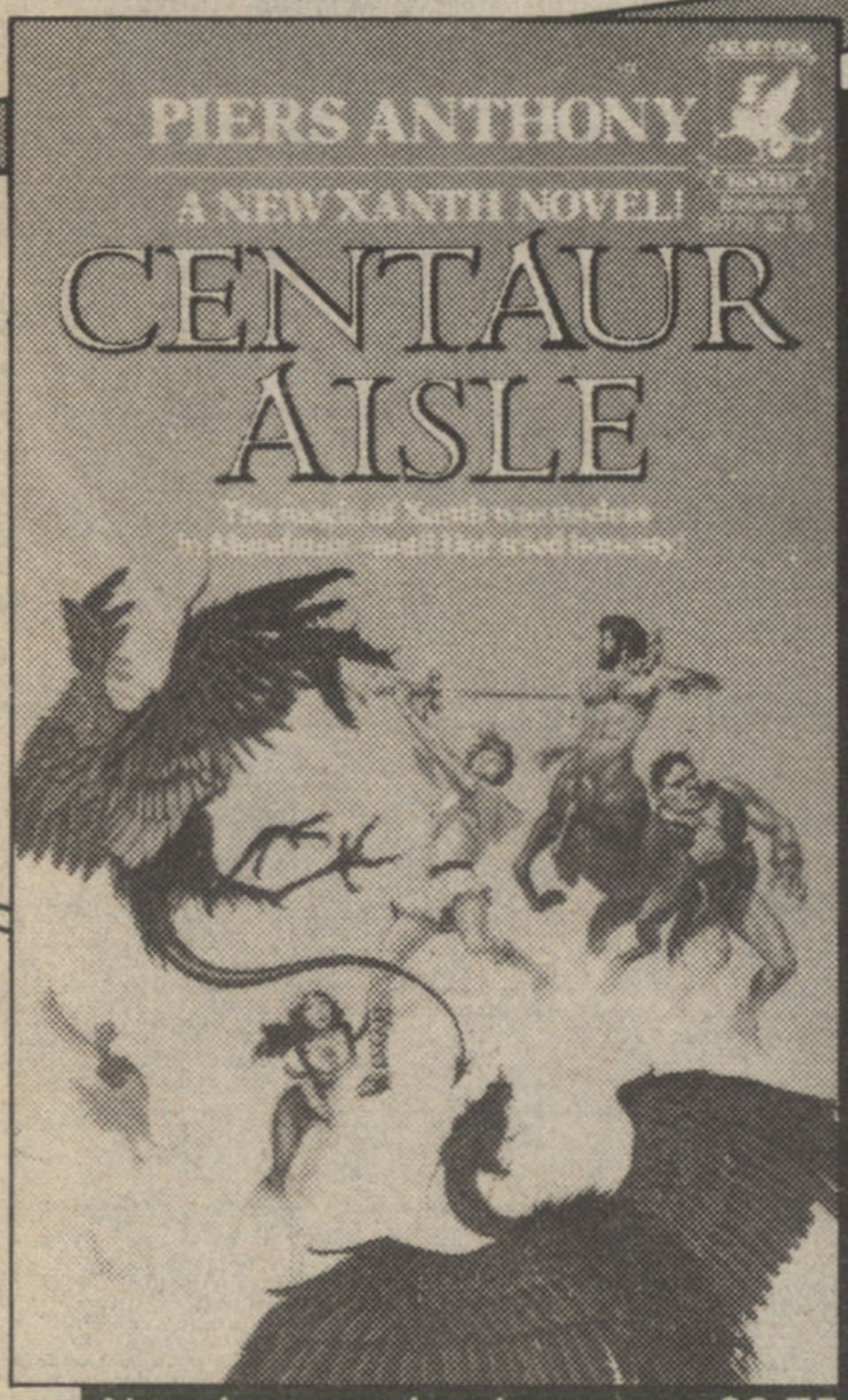
SYDNEY J. VAN SCYOC
Sunwaifs

If you think that looks good wait till you see what's coming up! Subscribe Now and Enjoy Most Favorable Rates for as Long as Your Subscription Continues!

DETAILS AND ORDER COUPON ON PAGE 36

DAVIS DIGESTS

You asked for it–
Now there's more XANTH magic
from Piers Anthony!



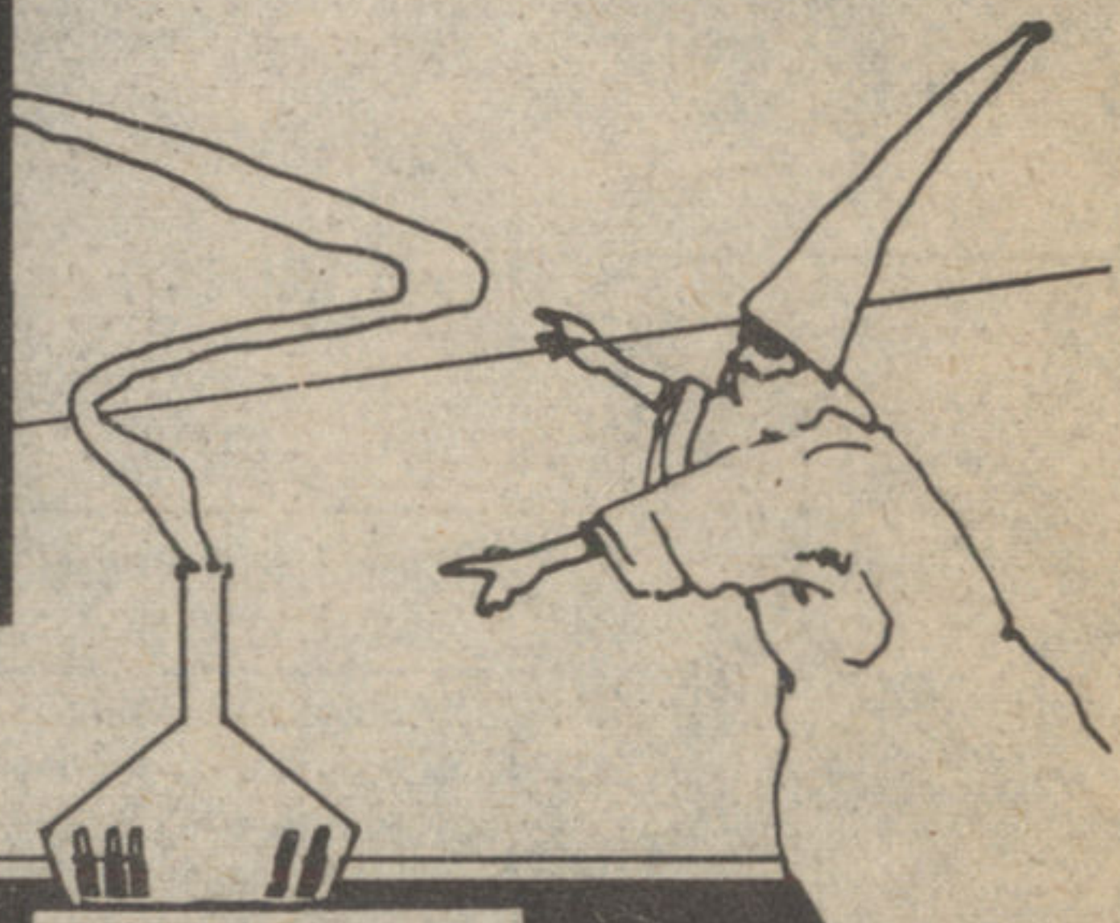
Now in paperback $2.75

A NEW XANTH NOVEL!

CENTAUR AISLE

By popular demand, the author of *A Spell for Chameleon, The Source of Magic,* and *Castle Roogna* takes you back to Xanth…

In *Centaur Aisle,* Dor is having trouble growing up to be the next Magician-King of that magic land. He wants no part of running the kingdom. But now with Good King Trent leaving on a mission to non-magical Mundania, Dor must not only rule, but free the king when he is suddenly imprisoned!



#1 Publisher of DEL REY Science Fiction and Fantasy

Published by Ballantine Books

Isaac ASIMOV's

SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE

Vol. 6, No. 1 (whole no. 48) 18 January 1982

Next issue on sale 19 January 1982

38

136

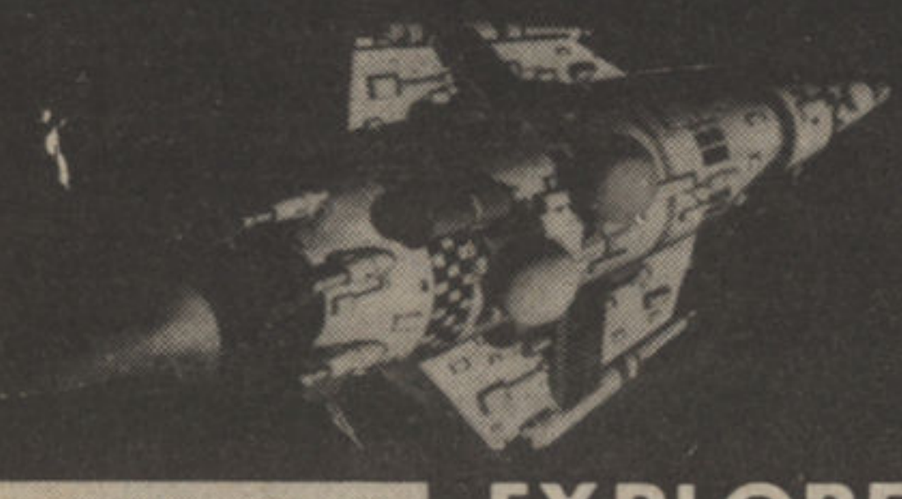
50

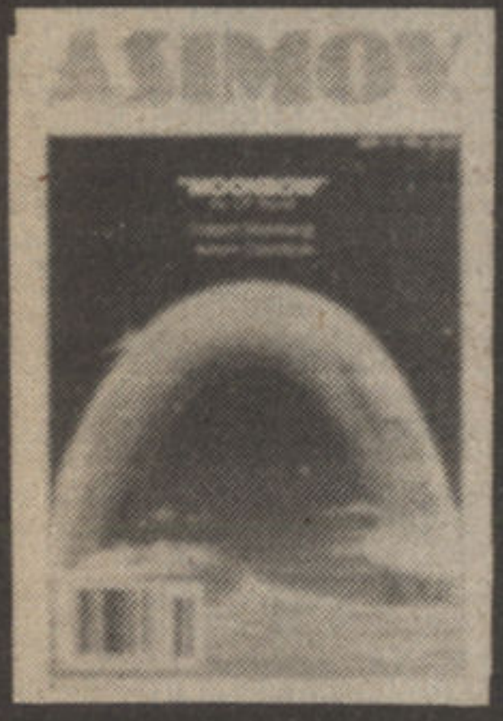
Joel Davis: President & Publisher **Isaac Asimov:** Editorial Director
George H. Scithers: Editor

Published 13 times a year by Davis Publications, Inc., at $1.50 a copy; annual subscription of thirteen issues $19.50 in the United States and U.S. possessions; in all other countries $22.75, payable in advance in U.S. funds. Address for subscriptions and all correspondence about them: P.O. Box 1933, Marion OH 43305. Address for all editorial matters: Box 13116, Philadelphia, PA 19101. Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine® is the registered trademark of Davis Publications, Inc.

Second class postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing office. POSTMASTER: send form 3579 to IAsfm, Box 1933, Marion OH 43306. ISSN 0162-2188.

COME





EXPLORE WITH US... AND DISCOVER

New Subscribers Only.

SUBSCRIBE NOW— SAVE UP TO $4.06

JOIN THOUSANDS OF SF AFICIONADOS IN OUR MONTHLY VOYAGES TO THE OUTER LIMITS OF IMAGINATION. ENJOY 176 PAGES PACKED WITH 10-15 STORIES BY FAVORITE AUTHORS LIKE AVRAM DAVIDSON, LARRY NIVEN, BARRY LONGYEAR, JAMES GUNN, JO CLAYTON, JACK C. HALDEMAN II, JOAN S. VINGE, A. BERTRAM CHANDLER (AND ISAAC ASIMOV, TOO)!

DETACH HERE AND RETURN COUPON TO

ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE DA219-8
Box 1933 • Marion • OH 43305

☐ Send me 6 issues for $6.97
☐ I prefer 12 issues for $13.94
☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill me

Outside U.S.A. & Possessions (cash only)
☐ 6 issues— $8.47 ☐ 12 issues— $16.94

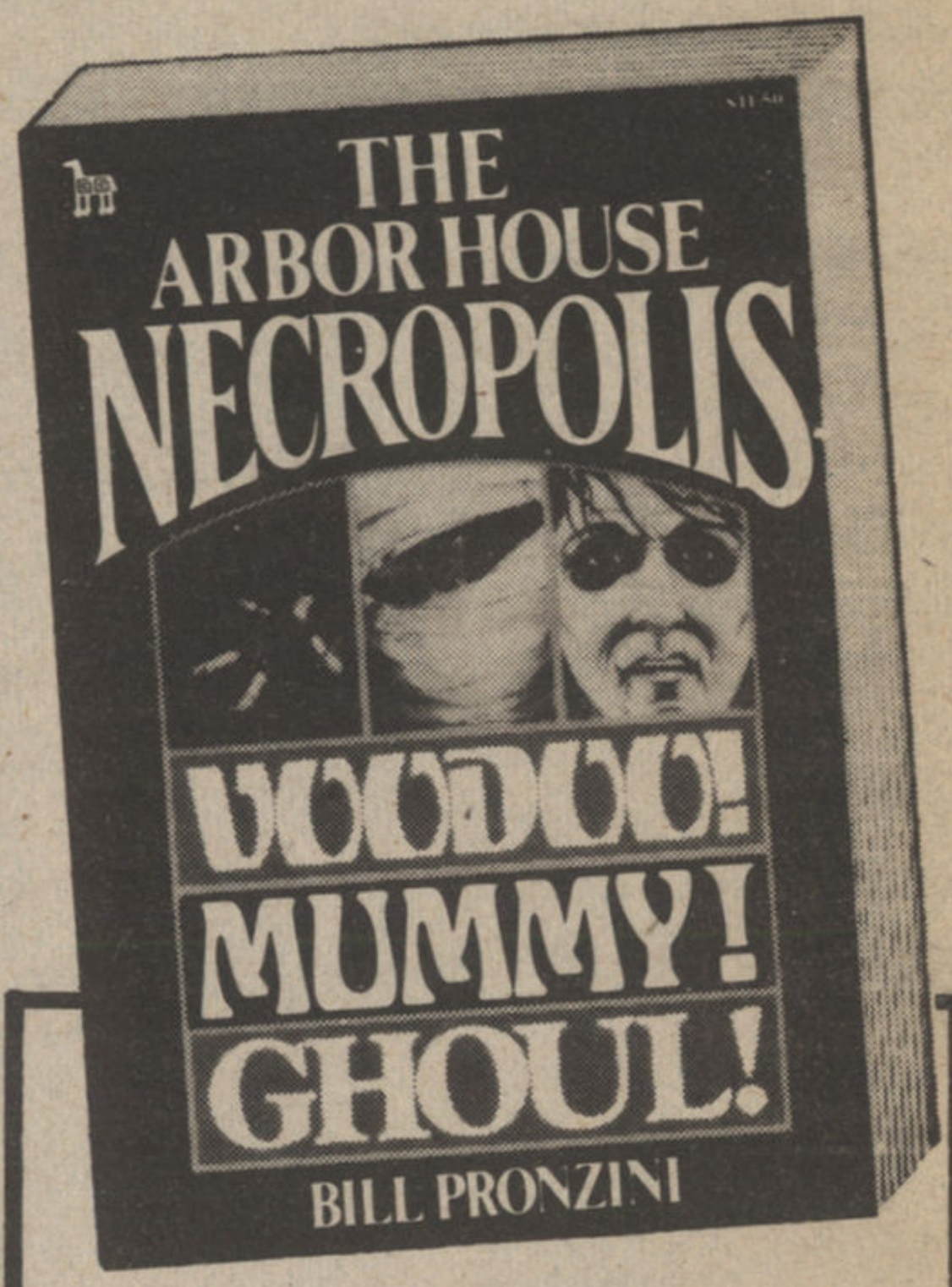
Name (please print)

Address

City State Zip

Allow 6 to 8 weeks for delivery of first issue

Big format paperback!



This literary monument to the netherworld features stories by...

Stephen King
Ray Bradbury
Edgar Allan Poe
Fredric Brown
Robert Bloch
Tennessee Williams
Charles L. Grant
Robert Louis Stevenson
Talmadge Powell
Morris West
Donald A. Wollheim
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
and more...

725 pp.; 6″x9″; $11.50
at bookstores
or direct from

PRIAM BOOKS
Arbor House Publishing Co.
235 East 45th Street
New York, N.Y. 10017

EDITORIAL: THE WRITER'S PLIGHT

by Isaac Asimov

art: Frank Kelly Freas

Some time ago, I received a rather sorrowful letter from a science fiction writer pointing out that inflation had raised the price of SF magazines rapidly in recent years but that the word rates commanded by writers for those magazines had not gone up correspondingly.

I passed the letter on to Joel; and we each replied, rather apologetically, that the price increases had been forced on us by increasing cost of paper, printing, etc. etc. etc., and that publishers' profits (what there might be of them) had not gone up, either.

I have, however, been thinking about the subject and perhaps I have done Joel wrong.

Back in 1938, when I was just making my first sales, my stories went to *Amazing Stories* and *Astounding Science Fiction*, each of which retailed, at that time, at 20 cents an issue. (I am not depending on memory here and on the glow of nostalgia. I took out those issues and looked at them.) The payment for the stories, in each case, was 1 cent a word. This meant I had to sell twenty words to buy a copy of the magazine.

Now let's shift to 1981. In the last couple of weeks, I sold two stories. One was to *Asimov's* (and no, that wasn't as easy a job as you might think—I sent George two, and he rejected one of them). The other, which was a fantasy and therefore unsuitable for this magazine, I sent to *F & SF*, which took it, but rejected the same story that George had rejected. (Stupid editors!)

Accepting my own word count on the stories as accurate, *F & SF* paid me 4.5 cents a word and *Asimov's* paid me 6.8 cents a word. Both magazines now sell for $1.50 an issue. This means I must sell thirty-three words to buy a copy of *F & SF* and twenty-two words to buy a copy of *Asimov's*.

Conclusion: *Asimov's* has just about kept up with the inflationary trend of the last 40 years as represented by the price of science fiction magazines. *F & SF* is a little behind, but it is a smaller

magazine and has always paid slightly lower rates. I can't criticize it for that.

Nevertheless, this doesn't mean that the writers' plight, generally, is a financially happy one. It isn't just how much you get for each word that alone counts; it's also how many words you sell. Considering how long it takes to write each word, and how many times you have to rewrite each word, and how freely and casually editors can reject each word, you can end up selling very few words indeed and even a reasonably high word-rate won't help, in that case.

In my first eleven years as a writer—and as a "successful" writer, who was selling almost every word he wrote, with very little revision involved—my total income, for all eleven years put together, was $7,700.

Of course, those years spanned the 1940s, when prices were lower than they are now and when I paid no income tax to speak of, so that the figure isn't quite as bad as it sounds—but it's bad enough.

It was because of my minuscule earnings as a writer that I continued with my education and got my degrees and academic status, which turned out to be a Very Good Thing. Had I begun to make "big" money those first eleven years, I might have been tempted to abort my education and become a professional writer at once and that would have been a Bad Thing, so I don't complain about my slow start. Quite the reverse.

But what is the situation today? A survey was recently conducted of a considerable number of writers who might well be considered as successful. At least, all those in the survey had published a minimum of one book, and to many earnest writers pounding their typewriters, even one published book would be an El Dorado dream.

And what was the annual income of all those successful writers, on the average? It turned out that the average was something like $4,700 a year. That's with this year's prices and this year's tax bite. And that's the average! Half of them (perhaps a little more than half, since a few high earners may disproportionately skew the average upward) make *less* than $4,700. Not exactly a living wage!

Now I admit I'm a fat cat. I won't pretend to coyness since it's all frankly spread out in my autobiography. It's been three decades since I made that little, or, for the most part, anywhere near that little. And yet, as readers of these editorials know, I have never forgotten my early years and my identification with the struggling writer is complete. So I blanched when I saw the headline (on the front page of the *New York Times* yet) and felt myself fill with rage at a world in what that could happen.

Subscribe to

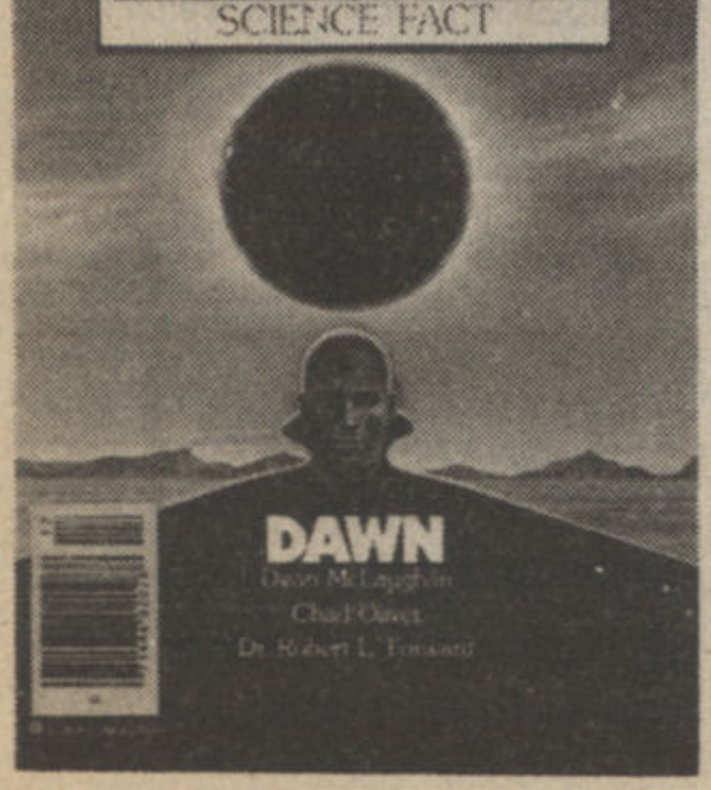
SCIENCE FICTION **analog** SCIENCE FACT

Over 120 pages of SF novelettes, short stories, challenging editorials, essays and spellbinding serials—an impressive mix of hard science and science fiction.

Walk the fine line between Science Fact and Science Fiction

SCIENCE FICTION **analog** SCIENCE FACT

Box 1936
Marion, Ohio 43305



Please send me **ANALOG**

☐ Six issues for just $6.97
(I save $2.03 off regular rates)

☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill me

Save even more.

☐ Twelve issues for only $13.94
(Outside USA/poss. add $1.50 for each 6 issues.)

☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill me
Charge to my ☐ VISA card ☐ MASTER CHARGE

Card #

						.										

Signature _____ Expiration Date _____

Name (please print) _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for delivery of first issue.

DB200-2

What's more, I read later, in the same newspaper, that reduced royalties are becoming the thing with book publishers. Expenses are going up and the publishers must shoulder rising wages for people working in paper mills, printing establishments, their own offices, and so on. One can't blame the wages for rising, considering inflationary pressure. Still, the publishers must find places to economize to keep book-prices from going through the roof and book-sales from going through the basement—so they ask writers to accept less.

But are there not inflationary pressures on writers, too? Don't writers have to pay rent, buy food, take care of the kids? Why must they, *and they alone*, take less so that others can take more, when it is the writer on whom the entire publishing industry depends, and it is the writer, and the writer alone, that gives it meaning?

Why? There must be a reason.

Let's compare the position of a writer with, say, a person laboring in a paper mill.

The product of the paper mill is paper. It is produced in reasonably uniform quality; and, if a particular quantity of a particular type and grade is ordered, precisely that quantity is received, and all of it is suitable for the purposes for which it is bought, and all of it is used. There is no "rejection" to speak of.

What's more, the various people in the paper mill are faceless non-individuals as far as the product is concerned. No one looking at a particular batch of paper knows which laborer, or which group of laborers is responsible, or would think of wondering, or could conceivably care. Even if some laborers are less good at their work than others, it would scarcely show up in the paper. Even if paper-making is a skilled craft, it is not a *talented* craft. A basic amount of skill is all that is needed.

How different from writing! Here material floods unasked into the publisher's offices in quantities a hundred, or even a thousand, times as much as he requires. He can pick and choose, and he ends up rejecting far more than he takes. You can see how this weakens the writers' economic clout and why the publisher can casually ask sacrifices of the writer where he can only smile winsomely at the paper-mill laborer.

What's more, writing is a *talented* craft. Even among writers with the same basic skills (writers who can all handle a typewriter and who all know how to spell words), some have that little undefinable extra that turns out a particularly good book and some do not. Those with that extra are much more likely to end up accepted than those who are not. If those few winners are subtracted, the mass of writers

who remain have an economic clout that is virtually zero.

But wait: all is not dark. There is another side. A laborer in a paper mill cares nothing for his work, usually, except as a means of earning a living. He lives for the work-day end, especially on Friday. Most of his life is waiting for tedium to pass. Why not? What's paper to him, or he to paper? His name's not on it.

A writer, on the other hand, is turning out more than a piece of writing. The writing has his name on it. It is *peculiarly* his. Others can write, but no one can write *precisely* as he does. He would like to earn a living, yes, but he also has a dream—that of seeing his name on a published story or book—that of receiving personal praise for a personal product—that of perhaps hitting the big-time of fame and wealth. (There's very little chance of the last, of course; but a laborer in a paper mill has no chance at all, in the way of his job.)

However needful the money, it is the dream that is the motive force, that keeps a writer going all hours and all days, despite dis-

appointment after disappointment.

And (to get back to that survey) things aren't so bad. Generally, writers who make very little money writing have other sources of income: a job of their own that they work at, or—possibly—a working spouse. None of them is starving.

Besides which, they were all asked what, in view of their low incomes, they planned to do in the future, and each one answered: "Keep on writing!"

And so, Gentle Reader, if you are a struggling writer, don't let this editorial discourage you. The dream remains, and lightning *does* sometimes strike, and it *may* strike you. Besides, no matter what anyone says or does—you will keep on writing. (Just don't give up your job, or your working spouse.)

MOVING? For your subscription to *IA'sf to* keep up with you, send both your old address and your new one (and the ZIP codes for both, please!) to our subscription department: Box 1933, Marion OH 43306.

Please **do not** send us your manuscript until you've gotten a copy of our discussion of manuscript format and story needs. To obtain these, send us a self-addressed, stamped business-size envelope (what stationery stores call a number 10 envelope), and a note requesting this information. The address for this and for all editorial correspondence is Box 13116, Philadelphia, PA 19101. While we're always looking for new writers, please, in the interest of time-saving, find out what we're looking for, and how to prepare it, before submitting your story.

ON BOOKS
by Baird Searles

The Wolves of Memory by George Alec Effinger, Putnam's, $14.95.
The Golden Torc by Julian May, Houghton Mifflin, $13.95.
Blakely's Ark by Ian MacMillan, Berkley, $2.25 (paper).
Too Long A Sacrifice by Mildred Downey Broxon, Dell, $2.50 (paper).
A Walk In Wolf Wood by Mary Stewart, Fawcett, $2.50 (paper).
The Witches of Karres by James Schmitz, Ace, $2.75 (paper).
The Weirdstone of Brisingamen, The Moon of Gomrath, Elidor, The Owl Service by Alan Garner, Del Rey, $1.95 each (paper).

Books to be considered for review in this column should be sent to Baird Searles % The Science Fiction Shop, 56 8th Ave., New York, NY 10014.

George Alec Effinger is one of those authors one tends to think of as "younger," but he's been turning out interesting works for long enough to belie that condescending adjective; his most recent novel lists ten other books to his credit. Perhaps the problem is that he has never delivered the major work that he seems capable of; the stories continue to be interesting, but lacking in the weight and authority that would put him in the top rank of that middle generation that began writing in the 1960s.

This latest novel, *The Wolves of Memory,* might well be a step in the right direction, though. It's neat and tight, and once gotten into, it lures the reader along with a kind of puzzle plotting that maintains interest. Set in what must be a nearish future, it is concerned with a society in which The Computer has Taken Over. This particular Colossus of diodes calls itself TECT; and not only does it ride herd on a thoroughly dreary, dispirited society, but it is fulsome, smug, sarcastic, and unfair.

At the beginning of the story, we meet Sandor Courane, the human hero of the novel, trekking through a desert on an alien planet, carrying the dead body of a woman. His memory comes and goes in odd flashes; and we get his story in flashbacks, disconnected chronologically. He has been exiled to this planet, which supports a colony of a handful of people barely above the survival level; TECT has sent him here for failing in three careers, all of which he was totally unsuited to.

A large percentage of the tiny settlement is terminally ill; Sandy first thinks that the healthy exiles have been sent there as nurses, but through the communicator link to TECT he discovers that things are not what they seem. He attempts to penetrate TECT's sarcasm, evasions, and downright lies; and the reader must go with him, wondering why he is struggling across that desert, whose body he is carrying, and what TECT's devious purpose may be.

This is an austere and rather gloomy novel, well written and, I think, successful in doing what it set out to do, which is to provide a new variation on the human innocent against the machine-god theme. I question the form, the chronologically fragmented flashbacks; the author must consider it important, since the title of the novel refers to memory, and there is an interior reason given in the story itself, but it still seems to me somewhat arbitrary and more than a little confusing at times. However, part of the work's quality is that it is not easy, and readers tired of zap guns and hyperspace chases will appreciate it.

A major source of suspense for the dedicated reader is the wait between volumes of a trilogy or series, particularly that gap between the first and second parts. If the first has been particularly impressive, not only is there the functional anticipation of what's going to happen in the ongoing plot, but the esthetic worry of the maintenance of quality; the more you liked the first book, the more you wonder if the author can keep it up.

So for those like myself, who considered *The Many-Colored Land* by Julian May an instant classic, there was considerable suspense engendered by the wait for the second book of the trilogy. I am more than happy to be able to say that *The Golden Torc* is a worthy successor; I read it with the same avid excitement I felt from *Land,* and I finished it with the same craving for more. And for those who have not yet read the first volume, I can but say, first, that in preparation for reading *Torc,* I took the extraordinary measure of reading *Land* again less than six months after reading it the first time and enjoyed it just as much, and second, that it would be insane to read *Torc* without reading *Land.*

Again, I am in a dilemma as to how much to tell about these novels, since the entire concept is so outrageously original that I wouldn't spoil the fun for anyone for the world. I might note obliquely that the new novel follows the other four immigrants to the Pliocene, those who elected to stay with the alien Tanu rather than escape; that we therefore see more of the Tanu culture; that everybody gets

back into the act save one, whose fate we are told of; and that it all comes to a climax that is, to say the very least, Wagnerian in scale. (Those who know something of Pliocene geology may anticipate, but that doesn't spoil anything.)

And again, I might note that fantasy lovers should not be put off by the science-fictional frame that Ms. May provides. Her knowledge and use of a particular area of myth makes it work superbly as fantasy; and only the stickiest of purists could object that it's too much one or the other; and bad cess to them, to be ethnically vulgar.

However, *Torc* does put the reader right back where he was. After that finale, how can May top it? *The Nonborn King* is still to come, and the suspense is killing me.

Survival after the end of civilization-as-we-know-it is an old and honored subgenre in SF; it seems to appear in waves, each wave reflecting in its use of destructive agents its own time. There were the English world-destroyers of the early 1950s, for instance (Ballard, Wyndham, Christopher, et al.), who generally used means apart from nuclear holocaust, curious for a time so soon after the atom bomb's debut.

Given the psychology of today, we may well be in for another round; and Ian MacMillan's *Blakely's Ark* might be a harbinger. The Ark of the title is a huge building/city constructed over Manhattan, the Hudson, and their environs as refuge from a virulent disease which has wiped out most of mankind, animals, and birds. It is highly contagious, but invariably kills within two weeks, so that there are some who have survived outside the Ark complex by strict isolation.

The story is that of an adolescent boy who has been kept alive by his father; when the father finally expires, Dave sets out by bicycle from upstate New York to try to achieve the almost mythical sanctuary of the Complex.

There are the usual alarms and excursions through the wreckage of our culture; and the Ark, when achieved, is needless to say not all it was cracked up to be.

But MacMillan, an author new to me, is an accomplished writer. Though the overall ideas are hardly new, there are original touches throughout; and he achieves both the nightmarish quality of a moribund world and the gritty reality of people and places rife with death, both of which are necessary to this sort of thing.

Speaking of Irish mythology (if you didn't know we were, there's

a clue in the above), Mildred Downey Broxon has done a brave thing in her *Too Long A Sacrifice*. She has attempted to integrate the rich Irish-Celtic heritage of pre-Christian gods and heroes with the current horrors occurring there, and for the most part succeeded.

She tells the tale of a couple who lived in Ireland just as Christianity is being introduced; Maire is a healer, Tadhg is a bard. They are trapped in a palace of the Sidhe, the Good Folk, beneath the waters of Lough (Lake) Neagh, for many centuries; when they are released, it is the present. Manipulated by powerful supernatural forces that they don't understand, they both become involved in the strife, she with the women who are attempting to end it, he with the gun runners and terrorists who are continuing it. In the process, many of the figures of ancient Ireland appear: the heroine-goddess Maeve, Brian Boru, a selkie (a sort of were-seal), merfolk, and the dead of all the centuries. The climax takes place at Tara, the Hill of the Kings.

Ms. Broxon has evoked both worlds well. I was particularly moved by the account of the terrible strain of simple day-to-day living in Northern Ireland, and I liked the fact that her couple from the past are extremely intelligent about comprehending and coping with contemporary life; no comedy of errors here. In fact, my major objection is, in a way, a philosophic one, having nothing to do with the author's skill: there is a subtle problem in combining fantasy with too realistic a portion of reality, particularly a troubled one. Whether we want to admit it or not, we read fantasy (and SF) for escape (that is not a word I'm ashamed to use, but many are) from just such realities, and I think many people will steer clear of *Too Long A Sacrifice* for just that reason.

Another fantasy just barely worth taking the time and space to mention is *A Walk In Wolf Wood* by Mary Stewart. Ms. Stewart's Merlin series *(The Crystal Cave* et al.) seems to be a great favorite with almost everyone but me—they go on telling me a good deal more about the politics of 5th-century Britain than I want to know. The current book is very definitely a juvenile, with none of the transcending qualities that make some juveniles something else again. In it, two contemporary children time travel in Germany's Black Forest back to Medieval times to help a nobly born werewolf get unenchanted. Again, I liked the children's intelligent approach to getting along in an alien time. But the book as a whole has none of the reverberations of greater magic that give depth to really good fantasy.

(This seems to be a month of meaningless coincidences—there's a wonderful description of the Black Forest in the Pliocene Age in *The Golden Torc*.)

There are certain books that simply shouldn't ever be out of print, "classics" in the best sense. One of those is the currently unavailable *The Big Time* by Fritz Leiber. Another was James H. Schmitz's *The Witches of Karres;* I say *was* because it is reprinted finally, and about time. If you don't know this wonderful novel, make haste to do so.

It's about the bumbling but appealing Captain Pausert of the trading ship *Venture* from the planet Nikkeldepain, who more or less by accident acquires as slaves three young sisters from Karres, a world of excessively wild psi talents; the inhabitants are simply viewed as witches by the rest of the myriad inhabited planets of the Galaxy, and generally given a wide berth.

He returns the sisters to their home, but in the process gets involved in all sorts of situations with such wonderfully unlikely creatures as the Sheem Spider, an antique war robot; several vatches, sort of disembodied genies from another universe who consider *our* universe just dreams; and the Worm World of Manaret, a planet-sized ship from yet another universe, all set to take ours.

This is a marvelous novel. The action is non-stop and complicated, without ever getting repetitious or confusing; the humor is way beyond the booze-'n'-broads variety to which SF was always prone. May it never go out of print again.

Alan Garner's works are in something of the same position in fantasy that *The Witches of Karres* was in SF; they are important works that have been too long out of print (one, *The Owl Service,* was never in paperback so far as I know). So I'm very glad to see four of them back more or less at once.

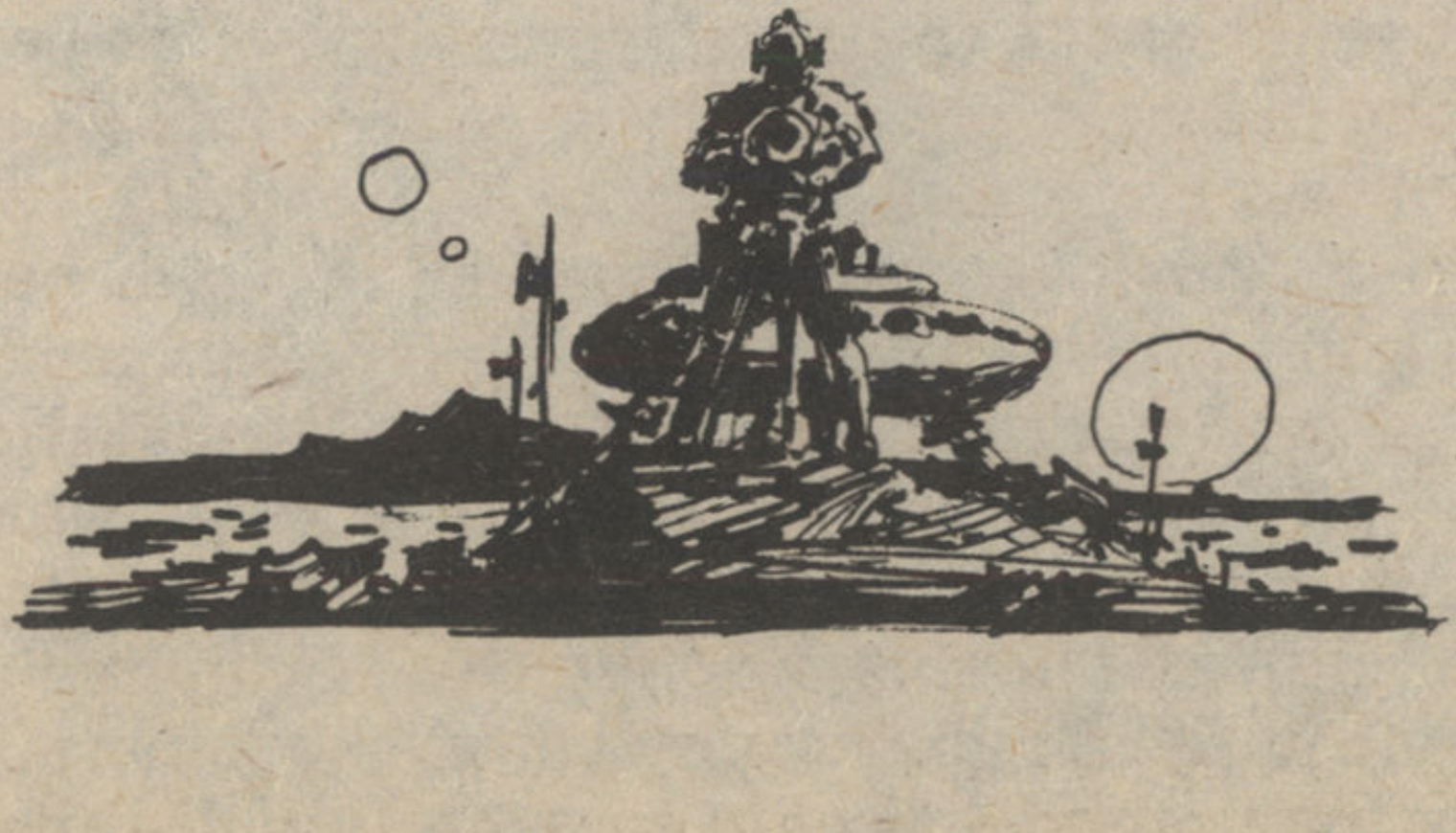
These *are* juveniles that transcend the genre; don't be put off by the fact that the protagonists are young people. In *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* and its sequel, *The Moon of Gomrath,* two children visiting a farm in Cheshire become involved in a war being fought across a few square miles of countryside by forces of good (dwarves, elves—many of whom are dying of mankind's pollution—and a mighty wizard who guards a sleeping king and his warriors) and evil (*svarts* [goblins], various enchanters, and female trolls called *mara*). Garner's miracle here is meshing this enchanted world with the ordinary one of the English countryside; the hair-raising chase that concludes the first book is only across a tiny distance, but one

in which every scarecrow, rock, or cloud might be the enemy. There is also a sequence in the ancient dwarf mines that is guaranteed to give anyone with even the slightest hint of claustrophobia nightmares.

Garner's style changes radically over the span of these four books. *Gomrath* is leaner, less the usual juvenile that *Brisingamen* is on the surface. The big set piece in this volume is the gathering of the Wild Hunt with its antler-crowned leader, which the children set in motion by lighting a fire on the Eve of Gomrath. (Continuing Celtic coinkydink department—the Wild Hunt plays a large role in *Too Long A Sacrifice*. And the chief villainess of *Gomrath* is the Morrigan, who, among other nasty habits, keeps turning into a raven. And what shows up at the end of *The Golden Torc* but a raven, connected with the name Morigel. I can say no more.)

In *Elidor,* Garner strips away almost all decoration from this tale of four children who go to the magic world of Elidor and return with its four treasures. For me, this is the least successful of the books, for he substitutes nothing for what he has subtracted. But this is rectified in *The Owl Service,* in which three adolescents in Wales play again an old and tragic situation, a pattern evoked again and again over time in this place by mysterious powers. The tale is sparely and subtly told, and reverberates with magic.

Let me put in a quick word for the covers of these four books; they are very beautiful. A fifth by Garner, *Red Shift,* which also has never had a paperback edition in this country, will be out by the time this sees print. I hope to have space to report on it next month.



AMONG THE DREAM SPEAKERS

by Robert Silverberg

art: Val Lakey/Artifact

This story is set in the same setting as Mr. Silverberg's recent novel, *Lord Valentine's Castle*, as well as the story collection (of which this story is a small part), *Majipoor Chronicles*.

On the morning of the day before Tisana's Testing it suddenly began to rain, and everyone came running out of the chapter-house to see it, the novices and the pledgeds and the consummates and the tutors, and even the old Speaker-Superior Inuelda herself. Rain was a rare event here in the desert of Velalisier Plain. Tisana emerged with all the others, and stood watching the large clear drops descending on a slanting course from the single black-edged cloud that hovered high above the chapter-house's great spire, as though tethered to it. The drops hit the parched sandy ground with an audible impact: dark spreading stains, oddly far apart, were forming on the pale reddish soil. Novices and pledges and consummates and tutors flung aside their cloaks and frolicked in the downpour. "The first in well over a year," someone said.

"An omen," murmured Freylis, the pledged who was Tisana's closest friend in the chapter-house. "You will have an easy Testing."

"Do you really believe such things?"

"It costs no more to see good omens than bad," Freylis said.

"A useful motto for a dream-speaker to adopt," said Tisana, and they both laughed.

Freylis tugged at Tisana's hand. "Come dance with me out there!" she urged.

Tisana shook her head. She remained in the shelter of the overhang, and all Freylis's tugging was to no avail. Tisana was a tall woman, sturdy, big-boned and powerful; Freylis, fragile and slight, was like a bird beside her. Dancing in the rain hardly suited Tisana's mood just now. Tomorrow would bring the climax to seven years of training; she still had no idea whatever of what was going to be required of her at the ritual, but she was perversely certain that she would be found unworthy and sent back to her distant provincial town in disgrace; her fears and dark forebodings were a ballast of lead in her spirit, and dancing at such a time seemed an impossible frivolity.

"Look there," Freylis cried. "The Superior!"

Yes, even the venerable Inuelda was out in the rain, dancing with stately abandon, the gaunt leathery white-haired old woman moving in wobbly but ceremonious circles, skinny arms outspread, face upturned ecstatically. Tisana smiled at the sight. The Superior spied Tisana lurking on the portico and grinned and beckoned to her, the way one would beckon to a sulky child who will not join the game. But the Superior had taken her own Testing so long ago she must

have forgotten how awesome it loomed; no doubt she was unable to understand Tisana's somber preoccupation with tomorrow's ordeal. With an apologetic little gesture Tisana turned and went within. From behind her came the abrupt drumming of a heavy downpour, and then sharp silence. The strange little storm was over.

Tisana entered her cell, stooping to pass under the low arch of blue stone blocks, and leaned for a moment against the rough wall, letting the tension drain from her. The cell was tiny, barely big enough for a mattress, a washbasin, a cabinet, a workbench, and a little bookcase, and Tisana, solid and fleshy, with the robust healthy body of the farm-girl she once had been, nearly filled the little room. But she had grown accustomed to its crampedness and found it oddly comforting. Comforting, too, were the routines of the chapter-house, the daily round of study and manual labor and instruction and—since she had attained the rank of a consummate—the tutoring of novices. At the time the rainfall began Tisana had been brewing the dreaming-wine, a chore that had occupied an hour of every morning for her for the past two years; and now, grateful for the difficulties of the task, she returned to it. On this uneasy day it was a welcome distraction.

All the dreaming-wine used on Majipoor was produced right here, by the pledgeds and consummates of the chapter-house of Velalisier. Making it called for fingers quicker and more delicate than Tisana's, but she had become adept all the same. Laid out before her were the little vials of herbs, the minuscule gray muorna-leaves and the succulent vejloo-roots and the dried berries of the sithereel and the rest of the nine-and-twenty ingredients that produced the trance out of which came the understanding of dreams. Tisana busied herself with the grinding and the mixing of them—it had to be done in a precise order, or the chemical reactions would go awry—and then the kindling of the flame, the charring, the reduction to powder, the dissolving into the brandy and the stirring of the brandy into the wine. After a while the intensity of her concentration helped her grow relaxed and even cheerful again.

As she worked she became aware of soft breathing behind her.

"Freylis?"

"Is it all right to come in?"

"Of course. I'm almost finished. Are they still dancing?"

"No, no, everything's back to normal. The sun is shining again."

Tisana swirled the dark heavy wine in the flask. "In Falkynkip, where I grew up, the weather is also hot and dry. Nevertheless, we don't drop everything and go cavorting the moment the rain comes."

"In Falkynkip," Freylis said, "people take everything for granted. A Skandar with eleven arms wouldn't excite them. If the Pontifex came to town and did handstands in the plaza it wouldn't draw a crowd."

"Oh? You've been there?"

"Once, when I was a girl. My father was thinking of going into ranching. But he didn't have the temperament for it, and after a year or so we went back to Til-omon. He never stopped talking about the Falkynkip people, though, how slow and stolid and deliberate they are."

"And am I like that too?" Tisana asked, a little mischievously.

"You're—well—extremely stable."

"Then why am I so worried about tomorrow?"

The smaller woman knelt before Tisana and took both her hands in hers. "You have nothing to worry about," she said gently.

"The unknown is always frightening."

"It's only a test, Tisana!"

"The last test. What if I bungle it? What if I reveal some terrible flaw of character that shows me absolutely unfit to be a speaker?"

"What if you do?" Freylis asked.

"Why, then I've wasted seven years. Then I creep back to Falkynkip like a fool, without a trade, without skills, and I spend the rest of my life pushing slops on somebody's farm."

Freylis said, "If the Testing shows that you're not fit to be a speaker, you have to be philosophical about it. We can't let incompetents loose in people's minds, you know. Besides, you're *not* unfit to be a speaker, and the Testing isn't going to be any problem for you, and I don't understand why you're so worked up about it."

"Because I have no clue to what it will be like."

"Why, they'll probably do a speaking with you. They'll give you the wine and they'll look in your mind and they'll see that you're strong and wise and good, and they'll bring you out of it and the Superior will give you a hug and tell you you've passed, and that'll be all."

"Are you sure? Do you know?"

"It's a reasonable guess, isn't it?"

Tisana shrugged. "I've heard other guesses. That they do something to you that brings you face to face with the worst thing you've ever done. Or the thing that most frightens you in all the world. Or the thing that you most fear other people will find out about you. Haven't you heard those stories?"

"Yes."

"If this were the day before *your* Testing, wouldn't you be a little edgy, then?"

"They're only stories, Tisana. Nobody knows what the Testing is really like, except those who've passed it."

"And those who've failed."

"Do you know that anyone has failed?"

"Why—I assume—"

Freylis smiled. "I suspect they weed out the failures long before they get to be consummates. Long before they get to be pledgeds, even." She arose and began to toy with the vials of herbs on Tisana's workbench. "Once you're a speaker, will you go back to Falkynkip?"

"I think so."

"You like it there that much?"

"It's my home."

"It's such a big world, Tisana. You could go to Ni-moya, or Piliplok, or stay over here in Alhanroel, live on Castle Mount, even—"

"Falkynkip will suit me," said Tisana. "I like the dusty roads. I like the dry brown hills. I haven't seen them in seven years. And they need speakers in Falkynkip. They don't in the great cities. Everybody wants to be a speaker in Ni-moya or Stee, right? I'd rather have Falkynkip."

Slyly Freylis asked, "Do you have a lover waiting there?"

Tisana snorted. "Not likely! After seven years?"

"I had one in Til-omon. We were going to marry and build a boat and sail all the way around Zimroel, take three or four years doing it, and then maybe go up the river to Ni-moya and settle there and open a shop in the Gossamer Galleria."

That startled Tisana. In all the time she had known Freylis, they had never spoken of these things.

"What happened?"

Quietly Freylis said, "I had a sending that told me I should become a dream-speaker. I asked him how he felt about that. I wasn't even sure I would do it, you know, but I wanted to hear what he thought, and the moment I told him I saw the answer, because he looked stunned and amazed and a little angry, as if my becoming a dream-speaker would interfere with his plans. Which of course it would. He said I should give him a day or two to mull it over. That was the last I saw of him. A friend of his told me that that very night he had a sending telling him to go to Pidruid, and he went in the morning, and later on he married an old sweetheart he ran into up there, and I suppose they're still talking about building a boat and sailing it around Zimroel. And I obeyed my sending and did my

pilgrimage and came here, and here I am, and next month I'll be a consummate and if all goes well next year I'll be a full-fledged speaker. And I'll go to Ni-moya and set up my speaking in the Grand Bazaar."

"Poor Freylis!"

"You don't have to feel sorry for me, Tisana. I'm better off for what happened. It only hurt for a little while. He was worthless, and I'd have found it out sooner or later, and either way I'd have ended up apart from him, except this way I'll be a dream-speaker and render service to the Divine, and the other way I'd have been nobody useful at all. Do you see?"

"I see."

"And I didn't really need to be anybody's wife."

"Nor I," said Tisana. She sniffed her batch of new wine and approved it and began to clean off her workbench, fussily capping the vials and arranging them in a precise order. Freylis was so kind, she thought, so gentle, so tender, so understanding. The womanly virtues. Tisana could find none of those traits in herself. If anything, her soul was more like what she imagined a man's to be, thick, rough, heavy, strong, capable of withstanding all sorts of stress but not very pliant and certainly insensitive to nuance and matters of delicacy. Men were not really like that, Tisana knew, any more than women were invariably models of subtlety and perception; but yet there was a certain crude truth to the notion; and Tisana had always believed herself to be too big, too robust, too foursquare, to be truly feminine. Whereas Freylis, small and delicate and volatile, quicksilver soul and hummingbird mind, seemed to her to be almost of a different species. And Freylis, Tisana thought, would be a superb dream-speaker, intuitively penetrating the minds of those who came to her for interpretations and telling them, in the way most useful to them, what they most needed to know. The Lady of the Isle and the King of Dreams, when in their various ways they visited the minds of sleepers, often spoke cryptically and mystifyingly; it was the speaker's task to serve as interlocutor between those awesome Powers and the billions of people of the world, deciphering and interpreting and guiding. There was terrifying responsibility in that. A speaker could shape or reshape a person's life. Freylis would do well at it: she knew exactly where to be stern and where to be flippant and where consolation and warmth were needed. How had she learned those things? Through engagement with life, no doubt of it, through experience with sorrow and disappointment and failure and defeat. Even without knowing many details of Freylis's past,

Tisana could see in the slender woman's cool gray eyes the look of costly knowledge; and it was that knowledge, more than any tricks and techniques she would learn in the chapter-house, that would equip her for her chosen profession.

Tisana had grave doubts of her own vocation for dream-speaking, for she had managed to miss all the passionate turmoil that shaped the Freylises of the world. Her life had been too placid, too easy, too—what had Freylis said?—*stable*. A Falkynkip sort of life, up with the sun, out to the chores, eat and work and play and go to sleep well fed and well tired out. No tempests, no upheavals, no high ambitions that led to great downfalls. No real pain, and so how could she truly understand the sufferings of those who suffered? Tisana thought of Freylis and her treacherous lover, betraying her on an instant's notice because her half-formed plans did not align neatly with his; and then she thought of her own little barnyard romances, so light, so casual, mere companionship, two people mindlessly coming together for a while and just as mindlessly parting, no anguish, no torment. Even when she made love, which was supposed to be the ultimate communion, it was a simple trivial business, a grappling of healthy strapping bodies, an easy joining, a little thrashing and pumping, gasps and moans, a quick shudder of pleasure, then release and parting. Nothing more. Somehow Tisana had slid through life unscarred, untouched, undeflected. How, then, could she be of value to others? Their confusions and conflicts would be meaningless to her. And, she saw, maybe that was what she feared about the Testing: that they would finally look into her soul and see how unfit she was to be a speaker because she was so uncomplicated and innocent, that they would uncover her deception at last. How ironic that she was worried now because she had lived a worry-free life! Her hands began to tremble. She held them up and stared at them: peasant hands, big stupid coarse thick-fingered hands, quivering as though on drawstrings. Freylis, seeing the gesture, pulled Tisana's hands down and gripped them with her own, barely able to span them with her frail and tiny fingers. "Relax," she whispered fiercely. "There's nothing to fret about!"

Tisana nodded. "What time is it?"

"Time for you to be with your novices and me to be making my observances."

"Yes. Yes. All right, let's be about it."

"I'll see you later. At dinner. And I'll keep dream-vigil with you tonight, all right?"

"Yes," Tisana said. "I'd like that very much."

They left the cell. Tisana hastened outside, across the courtyard to the assembly-room where a dozen novices waited for her. There was no trace now of the rain: the harsh desert sun had boiled away every drop. At midday even the lizards were hiding. As she approached the far side of the cloister, a senior tutor emerged, Vandune, a Piliplokki woman nearly as old as the Superior. Tisana smiled at her and went on; but the tutor halted and called back to her, "Is tomorrow your day?"

"I'm afraid so."

"Have they told you who'll be giving you your Testing?"

"They've told me nothing," said Tisana. "They've left me guessing about the whole thing."

"As it should be," Vandune said. "Uncertainty is good for the soul."

"Easy enough for you to say," Tisana muttered, as Vandune trudged away. She wondered if she herself would ever be so cheerily heartless to candidates for the Testing, assuming she passed and went on to be a tutor. Probably. Probably. One's perspective changes when one is on the other side of the wall, she thought, remembering that when she was a child she had vowed always to understand the special problems of children when she became an adult, and never to treat the young with the sort of blithe cruelty that all children receive at the hands of their unthinking elders; she had not forgotten the vow, but—fifteen or twenty years later—she had forgotten just what it was that was so special about the condition of childhood, and she doubted that she showed any great sensitivity to them despite everything. So too, most likely, with this.

She entered the assembly-room. Teaching at the chapter-house was done mainly by the tutors, who were fully qualified dream-speakers voluntarily taking a few years from their practices to give instruction; but the consummates, the final-year students who were speakers in all but the last degree, were required also to work with the novices by way of gaining experience in dealing with people. Tisana taught the brewing of dreaming-wine, theory of sendings, and social harmonics. The novices looked up at her with awe and respect as she took her place at the desk. What could they know of her fears and doubts? To them she was a high initiate of their rite, barely a notch or two below the Superior Inuelda. She had mastered all the skills they were struggling so hard to comprehend. And if they were aware of the Testing at all, it was merely as a vague dark cloud on the distant horizon, no more relevant to their immediate concerns than old age and death.

"Yesterday," Tisana began, taking a deep breath and trying to

make herself seem cool and self-possessed, an oracle, a fount of wisdom, "we spoke of the role of the King of Dreams in regulating the behavior of society on Majipoor. You, Meliara, raised the issue of the frequent malevolence of the imagery in dreams sent by the King, and questioned the underlying morality of a social system based on chastisement through dreams. I'd like us to address that issue today in more detail. Let us consider a hypothetical person—say, a sea-dragon hunter from Piliplok—who in a moment of extreme inner stress commits an act of unpremeditated but severe violence against a fellow member of her crew, and—"

The words came rolling from her in skeins. The novices scribbled notes, frowned, shook their heads, scribbled notes even more frantically. Tisana remembered from her own novitiate that desperate feeling of being confronted with an infinity of things to learn, not merely techniques of the speaking itself but all kinds of subsidiary nuances and concepts. She hadn't anticipated any of that, and probably neither had the novices before her. But of course Tisana had given little thought to the difficulties that becoming a dream-speaker might pose for her. Anticipatory worrying, until this business of the Testing had arisen, had never been her style. One day seven years ago a sending had come upon her from the Lady, telling her to leave her farm and bend herself toward dream-speaking, and without questioning it she had obeyed, borrowing money and going off on the long pilgrimage to the Isle of Dreams for the preparatory instruction, and then, receiving permission there to enroll at the Velalisier chapter-house, journeying onward across the interminable sea to this remote and forlorn desert where she had lived the past four years. Never doubting, never hesitating.

But there was so much to learn! The myriad details of the speaker's relationship with her clients, the professional etiquette, the responsibilities, the pitfalls. The method of mixing the wine and merging minds. The ways of couching interpretations in usefully ambiguous words. And the dreams themselves! The types, the significances, the cloaked meanings! The seven self-deceptive dreams and the nine instructive dreams, the dreams of summoning, the dreams of dismissal, the three dreams of transcendence of self, the dreams of postponement of delight, the dreams of diminished awareness, the eleven dreams of torment, the five dreams of bliss, the dreams of interrupted voyage, the dreams of striving, the dreams of good illusions, the dreams of harmful illusions, the dreams of mistaken ambition, the thirteen dreams of grace—Tisana had learned them all, had made the whole list part of her nervous system the way the

multiplication table and the alphabet were, had rigorously experienced each of the many types through month upon month of programmed sleep, and so in truth she was an adept, she was an initiate, she had attained all that these wide-eyed unformed youngsters here were striving to know, and yet all the same tomorrow the Testing might undo her completely, which none of them could possibly comprehend.

Or could they? The lesson came to its end and Tisana stood at her desk for a moment, numbly shuffling papers, as the novices filed out. One of them, a short plump fair-haired girl from one of the Guardian Cities of Castle Mount, paused before her a moment—dwarfed by her, as most people were—and looked up and touched her fingertips lightly to Tisana's forearm, a moth-wing caress, and whispered shyly, "It'll be easy for you tomorrow. I'm certain of it." And smiled and turned away, cheeks blazing, and was gone.

So they knew, then—some of them. That benediction remained with Tisana like a candle's glow through all the rest of the day. A long dreary day it was, too, full of chores that could not be shirked, though she would have preferred to go off by herself and walk in the desert instead of doing them. But there were rituals to perform and observances to make and some heavy digging at the site of the new chapel of the Lady, and in the afternoon another class of novices to face, and then a little solitude before dinner, and finally dinner itself, at sundown. By then it seemed to Tisana that this morning's little rainstorm had happened weeks ago, or perhaps in a dream.

Dinner was a tense business. She had almost no appetite, something unheard-of for her. All around her in the dining-hall surged the warmth and vitality of the chapter-house, laughter, gossip, raucous singing, and Tisana sat isolated in the midst of it as if surrounded by an invisible sphere of crystal. The older women were elaborately ignoring the fact that this was the eve of her Testing, while the younger ones, trying to do the same, could not help stealing little quick glances at her, the way one covertly looks at someone who suddenly has been called upon to bear some special burden. Tisana was not sure which was worse, the bland pretense of the consummates and tutors or the edgy curiosity of the pledgeds and novices. She toyed with her food. Freylis scolded her as one would scold a child, telling her she would need strength for tomorrow. At that Tisana managed a thin laugh, patting her firm fleshy middle and saying, "I've stored up enough already to last me through a dozen Testings."

"All the same," Freylis replied. "Eat."

"I can't. I'm too nervous."

From the dais came the sound of a spoon tinkling against a glass. Tisana looked up. The Superior was rising to make an announcement.

In dismay Tisana muttered, "The Lady keep me! Is she going to say something in front of everybody about my Testing?"

"It's about the new Coronal," said Freylis. "The news arrived this afternoon."

"What new Coronal?"

"To take the place of Lord Tyeveras, now that he's Pontifex. Where have you been? For the past five weeks—"

"—and indeed this morning's rain was a sign of sweet tidings and a new springtime," the Superior was saying.

Tisana forced herself to follow the old woman's words.

"A message has come to me today that will cheer you all. We have a Coronal again! The Pontifex Tyeveras has selected Malibor of Bombifale, who this night on Castle Mount will take his place upon the Confalume Throne!"

There was cheering and table-pounding and making of starburst-signs. Tisana, like one who walks in sleep, did as the others were doing. A new Coronal? Yes, yes, she had forgotten, the old Pontifex had died some months back and the wheel of state had turned once more; Lord Tyeveras was Pontifex now and there was a new man this very day atop Castle Mount. "Malibor! Lord Malibor! Long live the Coronal!" she shouted, along with the rest, and yet it was unreal and unimportant to her. A new Coronal? One more name on the long, long list. Good for Lord Malibor, whoever he may be, and may the Divine treat him kindly: his troubles are only now beginning. But Tisana hardly cared. One was supposed to celebrate at the outset of a reign. She remembered getting tipsy on fireshower wine when she was a little girl and the famous Kinniken had died, bringing Lord Ossier into the Labyrinth of the Pontifex and elevating Tyeveras to Castle Mount. And now Lord Tyeveras was Pontifex and somebody else was Coronal, and some day, no doubt, Tisana would hear that this Malibor had moved on to the Labyrinth and there was another eager young Coronal on the throne. Though these events were supposed to be terribly important, Tisana could not at the moment care at all what the king's name happened to be, whether Malibor or Tyeveras or Ossier or Kinniken. Castle Mount was far away, thousands of miles, for all she knew did not even exist. What loomed as high in her life as Castle Mount was the Testing. Her obsession with her Testing overshadowed everything,

turning all other events into wraiths. She knew that was absurd. It was something like the bizarre intensifying of feeling that comes over one when one is ill, when the entire universe seems to center on the pain behind one's left eye or the hollowness in one's gut, and nothing else has any significance. Lord Malibor? She would celebrate his rising some other time.

"Come," Freylis said. "Let's go to your room."

Tisana nodded. The dining-hall was no place for her tonight. Conscious that all eyes were on her, she made her way unsteadily down the aisle and out into the darkness. A dry warm wind was blowing, a rasping wind, grating against her nerves. When they reached Tisana's cell, Freylis lit the candles and gently pushed Tisana down on the bed. From the cabinet she took two wine-bowls, and from under her robe she drew a small flask.

"What are you doing?" Tisana asked.

"Wine. To relax you."

"Dreaming-wine?"

"Why not?"

Frowning, Tisana said, "We aren't supposed to—"

"We aren't going to do a speaking. This is just to relax you, to bring us closer together so that I can share my strength with you. Yes? Here." She poured the thick, dark wine into the bowls and put one into Tisana's hand. "Drink. Drink it, Tisana." Numbly Tisana obeyed. Freylis drank her own, quickly, and began to remove her clothes. Tisana looked at her in surprise. She had never had a woman for a lover. Was that what Freylis wanted her to do now? Why? This is a mistake, Tisana thought. On the eve of my Testing, to be drinking dreaming-wine, to be sharing my bed with Freylis—

"Get undressed," Freylis whispered.

"What are you going to do?"

"Keep dream-vigil with you, silly. As we agreed. Nothing more. Finish your wine and get your robe off!"

Freylis was naked now. Her body was almost like a child's, straight-limbed, lean, with pale clear skin and small girlish breasts. Tisana dropped her own clothes to the floor. The heaviness of her flesh embarrassed her, the powerful arms, the thick columns of her thighs and legs. One was always naked when one did speakings, and one quickly came not to care about baring one's body, but somehow this was different, intimate, personal. Freylis poured a little more wine for each of them. Tisana drank without protest. Then Freylis seized Tisana's wrists and knelt before her and stared straight into her eyes and said, in a tone both affectionate and

scornful, "You big fool, you've got to stop worrying about tomorrow! The Testing is *nothing*. Nothing." She blew out the candles and lay down alongside Tisana. "Sleep softly. Dream well." Freylis curled herself up in Tisana's bosom and clasped herself close against her, but she lay still, and in moments she was asleep.

So they were not to become lovers. Tisana felt relief. Another time, perhaps—why not?—but this was no moment for such adventures. Tisana closed her eyes and held Freylis as one might hold a sleeping child. The wine made a throbbing in her, and a warmth. Dreaming-wine opened one mind to another, and Tisana was keenly sensitive now to Freylis's spirit beside her, but this was no speaking and they had not done the focusing exercises that created the full union; from Freylis came only broad undefined emanations of peace and love and energy. She was strong, far stronger than her slight body led one to think, and as the dreaming-wine took deeper hold of Tisana's mind she drew increasing comfort from the nearness of the other woman. Slowly drowsiness overtook her. Still she fretted—about the Testing, about what the others would think about their going off together so early in the evening, about the technical violation of regulations that they had committed by sharing the wine this way—and eddying currents of guilt and shame and fear swirled through her spirit for a time. But gradually she grew calm. She slept. With a speaker's trained eye she kept watch on her dreams, but they were without form or sequence, the images mysteriously imprecise, a blank horizon illuminated by a vague and distant glow, and now perhaps the face of the Lady, or of the Superior Inuelda, or of Freylis, but mainly just a band of warm consoling light. And then it was dawn and some bird was shrieking on the desert, announcing the new day.

Tisana blinked and sat up. She was alone. Freylis had put away the candles and washed the wine-bowls, and had left a note on the table—no, not a note, a drawing, the lightning-bolt symbol of the King of Dreams within the triangle-upon-triangle symbol of the Lady of the Isle, and around that a heart, and around that a radiant sun: a message of love and good cheer.

"Tisana?"

She went to the door. The old tutor Vandune was there.

"Is it time?" Tisana asked.

"Time and then some. The sun's been up for twenty minutes. Are you ready?"

"Yes," Tisana said. She felt oddly calm—ironic, after this week of fears. But now that the moment was at hand there no longer was

anything to fear. Whatever would be, would be: and if she were to be found lacking in her Testing, so be it, it would be for the best.

She followed Vandune across the courtyard and past the vegetable plot and out of the chapter-house grounds. A few people were already up and about, but no one spoke to them. By the sea-green light of early day they marched in silence over the crusted desert sands, Tisana checking her pace to keep just to the rear of the older woman. They walked eastward and southward, without a word passing between them, for what felt like hours and hours, miles and miles. Out of the emptiness of the desert there began to appear now the outlying ruins of the ancient Metamorph city of Velalisier, that vast and haunted place of forbidding scope and majesty, thousands of years old and long since accursed and abandoned by its builders. Tisana thought she understood. For the Testing, they would turn her loose in the ruins and let her wander among the ghosts all day. But could that be it? So childish, so simpleminded? Ghosts held no terrors for her. And they should be doing this by night, besides, if they meant to frighten her. Velalisier by day was just a thing of humps and snags of stone, fallen temples, shattered columns, sand-buried pyramids.

They came at last to a kind of amphitheater, well preserved, ring upon ring of stone seats radiating outward in a broad arc. In the center stood a stone table and a few stone benches, and on the table sat a flask and a wine-bowl. So this was the place of the Testing! And now, Tisana guessed, she and old Vandune would share the wine and lie down together on the flat sandy ground, and do a speaking, and when they arose Vandune would know whether or not to enroll Tisana of Falkynkip in the roster of dream-speakers.

But that was not how it would be either. Vandune indicated the flask and said, "It holds dreaming-wine. I will leave you here. Pour as much of the wine as you like, drink, look into your soul. Administer the Testing to yourself."

"I?"

Vandune smiled. "Who else can test you? Go. Drink. In time I will return."

The old tutor bowed and walked away. Tisana's mind brimmed with questions, but she held them back, for she sensed that the Testing had already begun and that the first part of it was that no questions could be asked. In puzzlement she watched as Vandune passed through a niche in the amphitheater wall and disappeared into an alcove. There was no sound after that, not even a footfall. In the crushing silence of the empty city the sand seemed to be

roaring, but silently. Tisana frowned, smiled, laughed—a booming laugh that stirred far-off echoes. The joke was on her! Devise your own Testing, that was the thing! Let them dread the day, then march them into the ruins and tell them to run the show themselves! So much for dread anticipation of fearsome ordeals, so much for the phantoms of the soul's own making.

But how—

Tisana shrugged. Poured the wine, drank. Very sweet, perhaps wine of another year. The flask was a big one. All right: I'm a big woman. She gave herself a second draught. Her stomach was empty; she felt the wine almost instantly churning her brains. Yet she drank a third.

The sun was climbing fast. The edge of its forelimb had reached the top of the amphitheater wall.

"Tisana!" she cried. And to her shout she replied, "Yes, Tisana?"

Laughed. Drank again.

She had never before had dreaming-wine in solitude. It was always taken in the presence of another—either while doing a speaking, or else with a tutor. Drinking it now alone was like asking questions of one's reflection. She felt the kind of confusion that comes from standing between two mirrors and seeing one's image shuttled back and forth to infinity.

"Tisana," she said, "this is your Testing. Are you fit to be a dream-speaker?"

And she answered, "I have studied four years, and before that I spent three more making the Pilgrimage to the Isle. I know the seven self-deceptive dreams and the nine instructive dreams, the dreams of summoning, the dreams of—"

"All right. Skip all that. Are you fit to be a dream-speaker?"

"I know how to mix the wine and how to drink it."

"Answer the question. Are you fit to be a dream-speaker?"

"I am very stable. I am tranquil of soul."

"You are evading the question."

"I am strong and capable. I have little malice in me. I wish to serve the Divine."

"What about serving your fellow beings?"

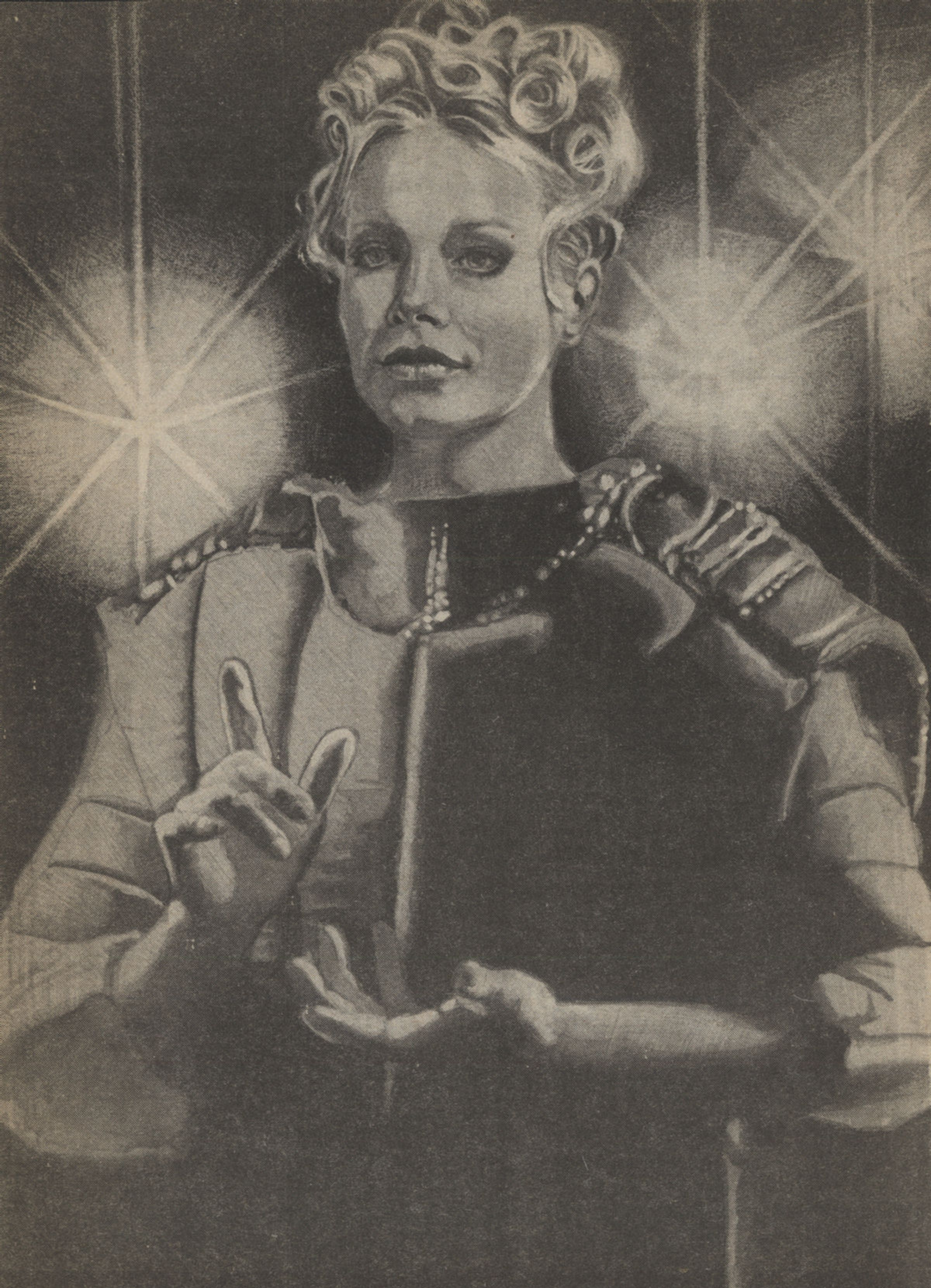
"I serve the Divine by serving them."

"Very elegantly put. Who gave you that line, Tisana?"

"It just came to me. May I have some more wine?"

"All you like."

"Thank you," Tisana said. She drank. She felt dizzy but yet not drunk, and the mysterious mind-linking powers of the dreaming-



wine were absent, she being alone and awake. She said, "What is the next question?"

"You still haven't answered the first one."

"Ask the next one."

"There is only one question, Tisana. Are you fit to be a dream-speaker? Can you soothe the souls of those who come to you?"

"I will try."

"Is that your answer?"

"Yes," Tisana said. "That is my answer. Turn me loose and let me try. I am a woman of good will. I have the skills and I have the desire to help others. And the Lady has commanded me to be a dream-speaker."

"Will you lie down with all who need you? With humans and Ghayrogs and Skandars and Liimen and Vroons and all others of all the races of the world?"

"All," she said.

"Will you take their confusions from them?"

"If I can, I will."

"Are you fit to be a dream-speaker?"

"Let me try, and then we will know," said Tisana.

Tisana said, "That seems fair. I have no further questions."

She poured the last of the wine and drank it. Then she sat quietly as the sun climbed and the heat of the day grew. She was altogether calm, without impatience, without discomfort. She would sit this way all day and all night, if she had to. What seemed like an hour went by, or a little more, and then suddenly Vandune was before her, appearing without warning.

The old woman said softly, "Is your Testing finished?"

"Yes."

"How did it go?"

"I have passed it," said Tisana.

Vandune smiled. "Yes. I was sure that you would. Come, now. We must speak with the Superior, and make arrangements for your future, Speaker Tisana."

They returned to the chapter-house as silently as they had come, walking quickly in the mounting heat. It was nearly noon when they emerged from the zone of ruins. The novices and pledgeds who had been working in the fields were coming in for lunch. They looked uncertainly at Tisana, and Tisana smiled at them, a bright reassuring smile.

At the entrance to the main cloister Freylis appeared, crossing Tisana's path as though by chance, and gave her a quick worried look.

"Well?" Freylis asked tensely.

Tisana smiled. She wanted to say, It was nothing, it was a joke, a formality, a mere ritual, the real Testing took place long before this. But Freylis would have to discover those things for herself. A great gulf now separated them, for Tisana was a speaker now and Freylis still merely a pledged. So Tisana simply said, "All is well."

"Good. Oh, good, Tisana, good! I'm so happy for you!"

"I thank you for your help," said Tisana gravely.

A shadow suddenly crossed the courtyard. Tisana looked up. A small black cloud, like yesterday's, had wandered into the sky, some strayed fragment, no doubt, of a storm out by the far-off coast. It hung as if hooked to the chapter-house's spire, and, as though some latch had been pulled back, it began abruptly to release great heavy raindrops. "Look," Tisana said. "It's raining again! Come, Freylis! Come, let's dance!"

TANYA HITS AND MISSES
by Martin Gardner

Mr. Gardner's most recent book, Science: Good, Bad, and Bogus, *has just been published by Prometheus Press of Buffalo, NY.*

Colonel Ronald Couth, chief computer scientist on the spaceship *Bagel,* had just received information about the ship's new orders from Earth.

"What's the mission, Father?" asked Tanya, the colonel's twelve-year-old daughter.

"A new solar system has just been discovered near the Galaxy's rim. We're on our way to investigate."

"Are there life forms on any of the planets?"

"Yes. I've been told that three of the first five planets from the central star have some form of life."

"Which one do we explore first?"

"The fifth."

Tanya clapped her hands. "How exciting! I wonder if its life is carbon based."

Colonel Couth's eyebrows went up. "How do you know the fifth planet isn't one of the two barren ones?"

The colonel laughed when Tanya explained. What did she tell him? See page 69 for the answer.

VOYAGER'S VIEW

Whirlingish, swirlingish
Gaps in your rings, Saturn:
Strange aberrations, these
Swatches of black. . . .

—There! Fifteen
daughters—See?
(Telerobotically)
. . . Spinsterish moons sweeping
Dust into cracks.

—William E. Nilsen

GAIN A DOCTOR, LOSE AN AUTHOR

Giggledy, giggledy,
Sweet Sharon Farber pens
Punny fun ditties, they're
Chock full of cheer.

Sooner or later, though:
Neuroanatomy!
When she hits *that*, we'll get
Naught for that year.

—William E. Nilsen

EXORCYCLE

by Joan D. Vinge

art: Jack Gaughan

Ms. Vinge and husband Jim Frenkel have begun a joint venture that will result in a mutual Christmas present to themselves: their first child. Along more literary lines, Ms. Vinge reports that she has sold a young adult novel, Psion, *to Delacorte Books, and that she is writing a story-sequel to her best-selling novel,* The Snow Queen.

It's a pleasure to live in Southern California— "Tan Your Hide in Oceanside," as the Chamber of Commerce billboard across the street proclaims. And it's a pleasure to be here in the off-season, to have a decent breakfast on the sunny patio and time for the morning mail. I stripped the brown wrapper off of my latest selection from the book club and turned it over: yet another in the seemingly endless stream of "inside" accounts of the late, great government scandals. But this one: As I read the title, I felt an odd shiver run up my spine. Just then Pewter bounded up into my lap, purring loudly for no obvious reason. I greeted him with my usual sneeze, and groped for a napkin. "Damn it!" I put my hands fondly around his thick gray neck. "I'm going to make violin strings out of you, cat."

"Sean, how can you say that," my wife Marge chided absently; her red curls and freckled hand appeared in the pass-through from the kitchen. She gave me a glass of milk. "He's just kidding, Pew."

"Don't count on that forever," I muttered. "You know, Marge, I wonder what really became of Prentice—"

"Prentice who?" Marge called. "Oh, that Prentice; the actor. How do you want your eggs?"

"Not raw. *That* Prentice, who made the Queen's Own Players the rage of two summers in the park, earned us fame and renown, as if you could forget Prentice . . ." Marge *tsk*ed. And yet, as much as

I admired him as an actor, personally he probably was the most forgettable man I ever knew; maybe that was why he was so good. He could have been another Olivier—if only he hadn't gone into politics. Pewter looked up at me through slitted emerald eyes, drooling sentimentally as he kneaded the title page, inflicting tiny puncture wounds. He assumed, like all cats, that whatever you were doing could not possibly be as interesting as he was. He was wrong. I sneezed again and wiped my eyes, deciding that I could forgive Prentice anything but that cat.

The cat had come strolling down the pier to meet us, as matter-of-fact as fate, on the foggy night we first saw the two of them. I'd come to the beach with Marge, to let the astringent air of a Pacific evening ease away the trauma of directing summer theater, to drown Shakespeare in the sibilance of the waves, and possibly to do a little necking. We strolled hand in hand along the pier, above the rushing water in the seagreen twilight; we were entirely alone, or so I thought. I was just about to suggest that we stop against the rail, when down the pier an enormous slate-gray cat materialized, marching toward us and yawping insufferably.

"Oh, look, Sean," Marge said, automatically putting out a hand. "Kitty, kitty, kitty—" She shared the opinion all cats had that they were irresistible, any time, anywhere.

I leaned against the splintery rail, shoving my hands into the back pockets of my jeans and wondering if this was why Mother always told me not to get involved with actresses.

The cat came to Marge and wound ingratiatingly around her ankles. She picked him up and nuzzled him; I sneezed, getting splinters, as the residue of loose cat hair settled into my hyperallergic nose.

"Lips that touch feline shall never touch mine," I said stuffily.

Marge groaned her contrition, dropping the cat and wiping her mouth on the sleeve of her work shirt. "Rats." She gave me a Kleenex. "Sorry. But look, he must belong to that man fishing down there. Let's take him back before he wanders away." She picked the cat up again. Obviously delighted, he settled across her shoulder and pinned me with an inscrutable gaze, before he looked away down the pier. Marge started walking.

I followed, wondering how I could have overlooked the fact that someone else was down there. Or the fact that he was quoting Shakespeare: " 'Oh, that this too, too insubstantial flesh would melt . . .' " Misquoting, I thought sourly, hearing his voice soar above the waves.

But Marge caught at my arm. "Hey, listen. God, he's *good,* he sends shivers down my spine!" And even if he did own a cat, I had to admit that much was true.

"Excuse me—" Marge said meekly, as we came up behind him.

He started and looked back at us almost guiltily. The cat began to purr in Marge's arms, blinking at him smugly. "Pewter," he said, his voice suddenly fading into the wind, "what have you done now?"

That confirmed my worst suspicions, but Marge only held him out reluctantly, saying, "We were afraid he'd get lost."

The stranger took the cat and draped him over a shoulder. "No—we're inseparable, really. But thank you." His clothes were nondescriptly hip, and he had a lean and hungry look. Such men are dangerous. . . . I wondered whether he turned Marge on. But he also looked like he wished we'd go the hell away. The feeling being mutual, I was about to suggest it, when Marge burst out:

"We heard you reciting. If you don't mind my saying so, it was tremendous. Are you an actor?"

"I don't mind." He smiled vaguely. "I have been . . . off and on." I harrumphed, placing a hand firmly on Marge's shoulder; she is a chronic victim of the Fallen Sparrow Syndrome. But she pressed on stubbornly, "Are you looking for a job? We're with the Queen's Own Players, we do Shakespeare in the summer, and contemporary drama through the year, here in Oceanside. We're having auditions this week. This is Sean Haley, our director. I'm Margaret Gillespie."

"Elwyn Prentice—"

Marge shook his hand heartily, and then I did. He had a weak grip. I said, "Pleased to meet you," insincerely; and before I quite knew what was happening we seemed to have invited him out for coffee. As we walked back down the pier, my plans for the evening sinking slowly in the west, Marge asked him, "Um, say—you weren't thinking of jumping, Elwyn, were you?" I winced, but somehow Marge manages never to offend anyone. It's a knack I've often wished I had.

Prentice only shook his head, looking morose. "Nay . . . no, it wouldn't have done any good."

It was hardly what I'd have called an auspicious beginning. But Prentice wound up—inexorably, perhaps—as one of the Queen's Own Players, and I was forced to admit to Marge (as she twisted my arm) that she'd been right after all. He was one hell of an actor. He was also just about the strangest man I'd ever met; and when

you work with actors that's saying a lot. Immersed in a character he was totally real and believable, but off-stage there was an insubstantial quality about him, a fuzziness around the edges that was somehow more than psychological: his ability to merge into the background was a subject of morbid fascination for us all. I could never remember what he looked like for more than half a minute at a time; it was even possible to forget he was in the room. I wish I could have said the same for his cat. We seldom saw Prentice outside of rehearsals. He didn't seem to have any interest in the things that usually interest actors, or human beings generally—"he hated public appearances," he said. He rented a picturesque hovel out by the beach, and it didn't surprise me at all when the neighbors told me nobody lived there. Someone in the cast summed it up well, once, when he said, "Prentice who—?" I think Prentice affected everyone that way.

But it was partly his lack of character that made him such a good actor—he could play anything, several parts in the same play, and lose himself in them completely. I'd hired him initially for stand-ins and bit parts, since the leads were already filled; but it seemed to be all he wanted. He was content to be the perfect spear-carrier, on stage as well as off of it, and he virtually avoided the spotlight like the plague: even his vanity was invisible. He had an early–Gene Wilder quality: he was totally inoffensive, a director's dream.

And yet he could have been co-director, if he'd been interested (and if my vanity had been invisible). He seemed to know every line Shakespeare had ever written, he must have had a mind like a tape recorder—and his promptings to the less blessed were somehow so perfectly tuned in that only a blank mind would receive him. His interpretations of Shakespearean dialog and byplay had an authentic feel that once led Marge to remark, admiringly, "You'd think he was a personal friend of the Bard."

"In that case," I snapped, "he's too old for *you*."

Partly because he was her discovery, he fascinated Marge; she was drawn to him as the moth is drawn to the flame. Or so I assumed, and proposed to her to be on the safe side, even though he never seemed to be more than pleasantly distant. Because there was something about Prentice, if you looked hard enough, that was haunting in the poetic sense—a shadow of bedevilment, a restlessness that somehow hinted at secret sorrows. He had, in a way, the mournful dignity of a down-at-the-heels tragic hero, and the faintly archaic speech patterns to match.

That may have been why he was so good at tragedy; and maybe it also had something to do with the thing that really made him remarkable on stage—his Shakespearean ghosts. Whether his inspired performances came out of skeletons in his closet or bats in his belfry, I'm still not quite sure. I probably never will be. But in any case, we did *Hamlet* that first summer; and, with a certain instinct for type-casting, I picked Prentice for the ghost of Hamlet's father. It was my casting coup of the year. As Hamlet walked the battlements at rehearsal, there appeared before him a hideous ectoplasmic manifestation that would have turned Christopher Lee green with envy. Its voice turned Hamlet as white as his father's ghost; and, raising a trembling hand, he said, "Eeek." His father's ghost fed him his lines. Later that night, catching Prentice as he drifted out the side door, I asked him how the devil he'd *done* that? He only swelled with rare off-stage presence, and smiling conspiratorially, said, "Trade secret." He disappeared into the foggy street, trailing Pewter on an invisible umbilical, whistling an Elizabethan tune.

The public, it turned out, was as impressed as we were by Prentice's ghost: In a way, it gave the perfect touch of reality—or unreality—to charge the atmosphere of the play and transport the play-goers back into Elizabethan times, when ghosts were as real a fear as muggers. Our summer season was an unmitigated success; Hamlet's ghost made the theater page of *Time,* and set us on the road to national fame and artistic fortune.

The next summer, knowing a good thing when I saw one materialize, I scheduled *Macbeth* and cast Prentice as the ghost of Banquo. The season's success topped all our wildest dreams of glory: we actually outdrew San Diego's Shakespearean Festival; and in July we received a request for a special, end-of-season performance at the western estate of the President of the United States.

Marge and I got married that summer and blew our honeymoon on a pointless trip to Disneyland, before we slid back into the endless stream of sunburned, blue-and-golden days, and nights of chilling mayhem on the stage. Life had never been more beautiful.

And then, after one Saturday matinee, Prentice squeezed into my broom-closet office, his cat and costume making him look like Dick Whittington come to London. He appeared to be more morose than usual. Pewter, on the other hand, bounded gleefully up onto my desk, scattering scripts and knocking over cola cups. I wondered what practical joker had started the rumor that cats were graceful.

He sat down in my correspondence heap and tried to rub his face along the edge of my chin. I sneezed, ruffling his fur. He protested in aggrieved tones. "Are you sure," I asked again, "that this cat isn't going to run off some day, and get hit by a truck?" Prentice said something but it was lost in another sneeze. I blew my nose on a used napkin; Pewter leaped down from the desk, taking a stack of books with him. "What did you say?"

Prentice picked up a book and whacked his cat in passing, before he rebuilt the stack on my desk. Pewter removed himself to a corner and began to wash, twitching indignantly. Prentice swept coats and dungarees off the guest chair and sat down. "Sean, I want to quit."

"My God," I said, "that's what I thought you said. Do you want more money? Bigger parts? Starting in the fall—"

He shook his head. "Nay. It's not that."

I began to pull on my beard. "But I even agreed to let your cat do a walk-on with the Three Weird Sisters—"

"I know." He laughed, looking uncomfortable. Pewter crept out of exile and settled under his chair, squinting up at me like an appraising jeweler. "You've been a real friend, Sean. Not like some. I don't know how to explain this to you. . . ."

"Is it the Presidential Performance coming up? You're the last person I'd expect to *get* stage fright, frankly."

"It's not that, either." He shrugged. "Tis no worse than the Queen's command performance. . . ."

"You've performed for Queen Elizabeth?" I gaped, forgetting the point.

He blinked back into focus, looking mildly surprised. "Not for a long time."

"Then you must know what an honor it is to perform for a president. You're the real reason he's asked us to come. Where's your artistic integrity—Hell, man, where's your conceit? You can't walk out now!"

He tied a lace on his doublet. "There's a thing I have to do. Something I've been needing and wanting to do for years, and now the time has come. I wouldn't do this to you, Sean, but I can't resist it." He looked up, and for half a second I wondered who he was, figuratively and literally.

"It can't wait another couple of weeks?"

"I'm just tired of acting."

I stopped pulling on my beard and started in on my hair. If there's anything I hate it's vagueness; or maybe it's actors. "You've got to

do better than that, if you're going to snatch fame and fortune out of my greedy little hands. How can you be tired of acting after two years—two years of greatness?"

"More like four hundred years, of obscurity." He sighed. "How much Shakespeare can a man stand?"

"Come again?"

He hesitated. "Well . . . you remember Marge saying I must have been a personal friend of the Bard? She was right. I was in the original productions." He swept off his feathered cap. "Elwyn, the 'prentice actor, at your service. My credentials are authentic."

"Oh. I see," I lied, glancing at the door and wondering whether he got violent when contradicted.

"You wanted to know how I did my ghosts so realistically." He looked faintly indignant at my expression, whatever it was. "Now you know."

"You mean because you're—authentically Shakespearean?"

"No . . ."

I thought for a moment. "You mean you're—"

"An 'ectoplasmic manifestation.' A ghost. A departed spirit—except that I never departed properly, for wherever I was supposed to go. 'I ain't got no-body,' as they say."

"Ah," I managed, wishing I'd brought my fifth of scotch down to the theater. "How did this—come about?"

"I died, but something didn't work out. The energy half of my matter-and-energy whole failed to dissipate when the bond was broken, perhaps." He looked apologetic. "It's only a theory. I try to keep up with the literature. It's all academic, anyway. I'm *here*, drifting helplessly through eternity . . . a lost soul." He sighed again, melodramatically. "Always trying to get in out of the cold."

It occurred to me that he always seemed to be standing in a draft; and I'd studied enough horror films to know what *that* meant. "How—uh, how does one do that?"

"By taking over someone else's body . . . nay, don't worry, not yours." I wondered whether to be relieved or insulted. "I only choose strangers. But that's my real problem. The cycle is almost complete again, and the urge to inhabit someone is getting to be irresistible. I don't know if I can finish the season."

"Now you're telling me that you're a demon." I couldn't help sounding a little petulant. "That you really take over someone else's mind and body, you make them commit vile deeds, and humiliate themselves, and all that? That's a little hard for me to believe. Especially

of you, Elwyn. What in Hell—er—would make you want to do anything like that?"

"It's hard to explain, to a 'mere mortal'." He grinned ruefully. "But I'm not exactly ye Ideal Demon—I've always been a failure at real, diabolical creativity. I'm only good at causing gourmets to spill wine in expensive restaurants, or forcing decent people to show their friends home movies of their baby's drool . . . I've always lacked the inspiration of a Classic Demon.

"It's not even the classic Evil that makes you do it, some devil with a pitchfork tail; or at least I don't think so. But it is a kind of damnation, to be stranded alone forever between here and there. It warps your perspective. It makes you jealous, it makes you bitter . . . and it makes you competitive. You resent that happy soul secure in its body; you want to dominate it and take over, you want to take out your frustrations on it. It's like a punching bag."

"What happens if you win?"

"I don't know. I've never gotten a chance to find out. Like I said, I've always been a—hopeless failure. I've been thrown out of more bodies than I can count."

"Exorcised?" I whispered.

He nodded.

"But if you're not classic Evil, how can you be tossed out by classic Good?"

"I don't know that, either. Maybe there is something to the classical definitions." He leaned back in the chair and stretched his booted feet; I noticed that the chair hadn't creaked. "It just seems to set up vibrations that I can't tolerate, like scratching your nails on the blackboard. Except that in my state it's more serious, it disassociates me, or polarizes me, or something like that. The longer I resist and stay in the body, the more damage it does—I can't inhabit another body until I've spent time this way, sometimes *years*, getting myself back together again."

"So what you're trying to tell me is that this cycle you mentioned is up again, and that's why you want to go out and inhabit somebody else?"

"Yea. And this time I feel that at last it's going to be a success! I'm fed up with being a bush-league demon, getting cast out like an old shoe. I'm very grateful to you, Sean, more than I can say, for the chance you've given me to prove myself. Working with the troupe—it's been like old times again, the best of times. It's renewed my faith in myself, after so many humiliating failures: I have self-confidence

again. This time I'm going to do something grandiosely—Evil. I'm going to find someone whose goals and needs and nature truly match my dark desires. This time I'm going to succeed, thanks to you, Sean!"

I looked back over my shoulder at the window, feeling a little like an arcane Norman Vincent Peale. The eucalyptus trees rustled reassuringly in the theater courtyard outside; life went on as before. "Well, I'm going to level with you, Elwyn . . . I don't know if you're crazy, or I am." I laughed, nervously. "I—almost—believe you really intend to go out and bedevil the world. And frankly, I don't give a damn. What I give a damn about is the fact that you want to do it *now*, and our biggest performance is coming up in two weeks. If I've really done so much for you, will you do just this one thing for me? Just stay through that performance. Then you can fly up the flue if you want to, it won't really matter. And we'll be forever grateful to you."

He shifted in his seat, like a soul in torment. "I just don't know if I can wait that long. . . ."

"I took you in when you were a—lost soul, remember." I leaned forward, hearing the pencil can fall off my desk. "And think of the president! You can't walk out on him, it's unprofessional . . . it's probably even unpatriotic." Inspiration came to me from above; or below. "You performed for the Queen of England as a mere apprentice in the trade. How can even you pass up the chance to perform now as the real star, before our president and his top officials? Some of the most important men in the world, all waiting for *you?*"

"Ah . . ." His eyes gleamed like red glass in the late afternoon light; I felt a sudden desire to crawl under my desk and look for pencils. "Zounds, 'tis perfect! 'The play's the thing, in which to catch the conscience of the king—' You're right. I'll stay."

I sighed, with relief or something less comfortable.

"But you must swear never to reveal what I've told you, to anyone."

"You're secret's safe with me," I said sincerely, having no more desire to be put away than the next person.

" '*Swear*—' " He rose from his chair, swelling into night's dark agent, and swept from the room on peals of maniacal, theatrical laughter.

I told one person—Marge—since I felt it was only fair to let her know, and since she was my wife and didn't count, because she couldn't testify against me. It was the sort of thing you have to tell someone. Besides, she'd wanted to know what had happened to all

the scotch. She listened soberly, and then told me that I didn't have to make up tales about Prentice, she'd always liked me best anyhow.

Our final grand performance, Prentice's farewell appearance, was flawless: when Banquo's ghost came billowing down the dining hall Macbeth turned green, as he invariably did, and three Secret Service men fainted in the second row. And after the performance, Prentice disappeared without a trace, true to his word. We never saw him, or heard from him, again. The only thing he left behind was Pewter, yowling forlornly in the empty hall. He wound himself inextricably around my legs, peering up at us with the eyes of an abandoned child. "Sean, do you suppose it was true?" Marge said softly. I shrugged, but against my better nature I picked him up, and we took him home.

"Your eggs are petrifying, Seanie. Eat, eat!" Marge removed the book from Pewter's grasp and looked at the cover. "What, yet another book about red faces in high places? Good Lord, is there no end?"

"Goodness had nothing to do with it, my dear. Not that I haven't always thought most politicians were crooks; I'm inured to that. But, my God, at least they're usually competent crooks, and don't get caught at it. . . . But you know, maybe this really is the definitive confession." I stared again at the title: *The Devil Made Me Do It.*

"You still think Prentice was serious about that, after all this time?" She pulled on her sweater and sat down. "Just think: We knew him when."

"That we did. Too bad he wasn't as good a politician as he was an actor."

"You don't think the present political follies were exactly what he had in mind, huh?"

I shook my head. "Nope. He wanted to be behind grandiose evil. But I'm afraid he's still a bush-league demon." Pewter raised his head and peered up at me, his whiskers quivering, and slowly closed his eyes.

THE SF CONVENTIONAL CALENDAR

by Erwin S. Strauss

I'm just back from the Denver WorldCon with lots of new con(vention) listings, including the 1983 WorldCon. Enjoy a social weekend with your favorite SF authors, editors, artists and fellow fans. For a longer, later list, an explanation of cons, and a sample of SF folksongs, send me an addressed, stamped envelope at 9850 Fairfax Sq. #232, Fairfax VA 22031. (703) 273-6111 is the hot line. If a machine answers, leave your area code number and I'll call back at my expense. For free listings of your con, let me know 5 months ahead.

HexaCon. For info, write: **Newrock, RD2, Box 270A, Flemington NJ 08822.** Or phone: **(201) 996-4513** (10 am to 10 pm only, not collect). Con will be held in: Lancaster PA (if city omitted, same as in address) on: 8-10 Jan., 1982. Guests will include: artists Kelly ("Art of SF") Freas and Phil ("The Capture") Foglio. All-you-can-eat Amish banquet.

ChattaCon, (615) 842-9363. Chattanooga TN, 15-17 Jan. Larry (Known Space) Niven, Wilson Arthur ("Ice and Iron") Tucker, Sharon Webb. Banquet, masquerade, 24-hour party room.

MagiCon, 4567 Cerise Ave., New Orleans LA 70127. 23-24 Jan. Rault Center Hotel.

ConFusion, AASFA, Box 1821, Ann Arbor MI 48106. (313) 485-4824. 29-31 Jan. Philip Jose ("Riverworld") Farmer, N. Rest, Larry Tucker. Banquet, costumes, snow creature contest.

Boskone, Box G, MIT PO, Boston MA 02139. 12-14 Feb. Donald A. (DAW) Wollheim, Hugo artist Michael Whelan, Spider (Callahan's Crosstime Saloon) Robinson. 19th time, at new hotel.

ScouseCon, c/o Evans, 77 Selby Rd., Orrell Park, Liverpool, England L9 8EB, UK. 13-14 Feb.

CapriCon, Bestler, 101 W. Harrison, Oak Park IL 60304. 26-28 Feb. Gene Wolfe, Mike Stein.

YuCon, c/o SFera, Ivanicgradska 41a, 41000, Zagreb, Yugoslavia. 26-28 Feb. National con.

EatonCon, Slusser, U. Library, Box 5900, U of C, Riverside CA 92517. 27-28 Feb. Academic.

WisCon, Box 1624, Madison WI 53701. (608) 231-2916 (days), 233-0326 (eves). 5-7 Mar. Terry ("Universe") Carr, Suzette Haden (Communipath) Elgin. The leading feminist oriented con.

UpperSouthClave, Box U122, Coll. Hts. Sta., Bowling Green KY 42101. Park City KY, 5-7 Mar. Irvin Koch. Another relaxacon at the Park Mammoth Resort. 24-hour party room, hot pool.

TropiCon, Box 2811, Boca Raton FL 33432. 12-14 Mar. Samuel R. Delany, Vincent DiFate, Gene Wolfe, James Gunn, Brian Aldiss, John Morressy. Coordinated with the academic SwannCon.

KingKon, Box 1284, Colorado Springs CO 80901. (303) 633-8845. 12-14 Mar. L. Neil Smith.

ApriCon, B-C SF Soc., 317 Ferris Booth Hall, Columb. U., New York NY 10027. 12 Apr. Disch.

CoastCon, Box 1423, Biloxi MS 39531. 12-14 Mar. Richard & Wendy ("Elfquest") Pini, Joe ("Forever War") Haldeman, Jo (Diadem) Clayton, George Alec Effinger. 24-hour party room.

LunaCon, Box 338, New York NY 10150. Hasbrouck Heights NJ (near New York City), 19-21 Mar. Fred ("Berserker") Saberhagen, artist John Schoenherr, S. Stiles. Old-line Eastern con.

SkyCon, SG Books, 38 Wall, Asheville NC 28801. 15-16 May. H. (Mission of Gravity) Clement.

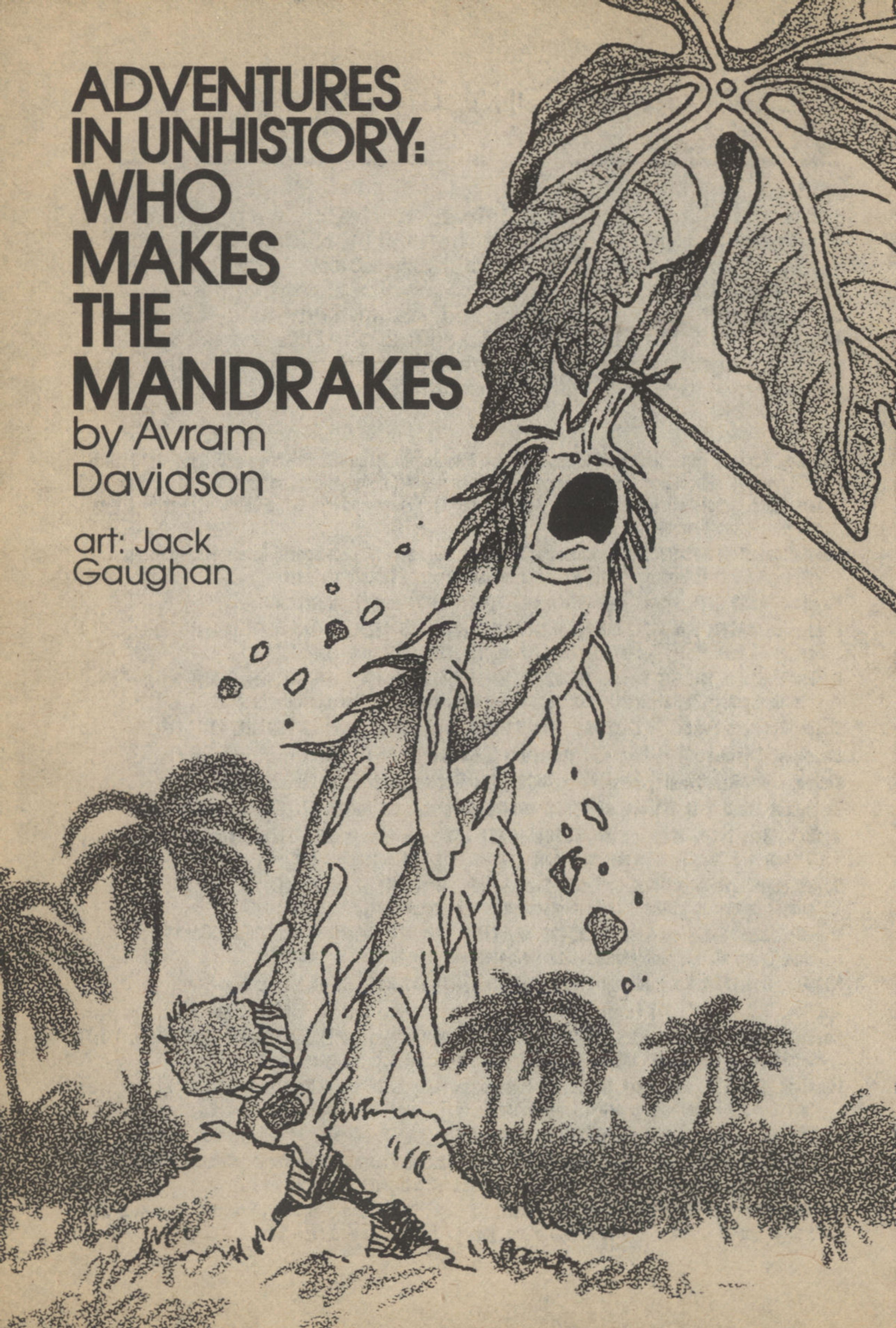
ChiCon IV, Box A3120, Chicago IL 60690. 2-6 Sep., 1982. A. Bertram (Rim Worlds) Chandler, Kelly Freas, Lee Hoffman. The 1982 World SF Con. Join in 1981 for $40 and save $10.

ConStellation, Box 1046, Baltimore MD 21203. 1-5 Sep., 1983. John (Zanzibar) Brunner, Dave Kyle, Jack (Well of Souls) Chalker. The 1983 WorldCon. Join in '81 for $15 and save $5.

ADVENTURES IN UNHISTORY: WHO MAKES THE MANDRAKES

by Avram Davidson

art: Jack Gaughan



. . . in which the distinguished Mr. Davidson tells—among other things —how dankly dark the Dark Ages were.

If we were to regard **mandrake** as purely an English word, what would we get? "Man-male-duck?" Absurd. "Man-dragon?" Not very helpful, despite the echo of "mandragora." Let us try again, and so, recalling that **drake, drago, dragon,** can also mean "snake," we come up with "man-snake." There are of course the, sometimes—often—snaky roots of the mandrake, which may also remind us of the ABRAXAS symbol of the Gnostics, which had snakes as legs: and this in turn might remind us of the old Greek demigod Ericthonius, who was born with snake-like and boneless legs, and as he could not walk, was obliged to invent the wheeled vehicle. . . . But all this is mere tickling of the fancy, except that "man-snake" may seem to imply a phallic image—a mental one, I mean.

However. No. Mentally in the Downstairs part of the mind as distinct from the Upstairs part of the mind, some of these notions may have been present. But the word itself—and General Semantics (remember General Semantics?) has cautioned us that *The word is not the thing* . . . that although we may say "the kettle boils," actually the kettle does nothing of the sort: it is the water which boils—the word **mandrake** itself is not an English word, and in tracing the word back to its origin we may be able to trace back the use of the mandrake plant to its own origin. Only maybe not. Not that it may have no origin, but that it may have several origins.

Only maybe not.

In his book, *The Mystic Mandrake,* Mr. C.J.S. Thompson, M.B.E., says—and some of his qualifications to say are implied in his wonderfully and typically British title: Honorary Curator of the Historical Collection of the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons of England—Mr. Thompson says that **mandrake** (the word) comes from the word **mandragora** (pronounced, by the way, man-**DRAG**ora, and not mandra**GOR**a), and anyone else may say so, too, because it does. "Not poppy nor mandragora," says Iago, "Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world, Shall ever medicine thee to that

sweet sleep Which thou ow'dst yesterday." By **syrups,** of course, Shakespeare is not talking of the stuff you put on pancakes, and by **poppy** he doesn't mean mommy's husband, either. By **poppy** he of course means opium, and if he compares syrup of mandragora to syrup of opium, then it must have been something as strong as the stuff which people try to sell you in parking lots—

—Mr. Thompson is further very helpful in telling us that **mandragora** comes from the Greek and Latin **mandragoras**: and where does *this* come from? he is at no loss, and informs us, probably from the Sanscrit words **mandors,** meaning "sleep," and **agora,** meaning "substance" . . . in other words, "sleep stuff." Hmm.

(Speaking of parking lots, some teenager once yelled to me halfway across a parking lot to ask if I wanted to buy some mescaline. I answered by asking how he knew I wasn't a nark. "*You* don't look like no nark," was his total reply. And once, when I was living in a quasi-commune in California, the sort of arrangement which students in Portugal used to call a "republic," I was visited by a clergyman. His arrival was marked by a certain commotion; and, after he left, a fellow-lodger said to me, with a combination of reproach and regret, "When I saw that dark suit and that white shirt, I thought to myself, '*A nark!*' and I run and flushed my joint down the john." This same fellow, who enjoyed an inherited income of $12,000 a year before inflation, felt, nevertheless, that he ought to *earn* something: so he offered to sell what is I believe called "a controlled substance" to someone he met in a loose bar and who was not wearing a dark suit nor a white shirt and who, as it developed, *was* a nark. This was my neighbor's second offense, and I haven't heard from him lately. Better he should've tried mandragora.)

We may say, then, that, roughly speaking, mandrake is the plant and mandragora is its extract.

We may say, too, that although the Sanscrit—and for the benefit of one or two readers who may not know, Sanscrit is an ancient Indo-European language once spoken in India and since used there for religious and other learned purposes, rather as in Europe Latin has been used—although the Sanscrit **mandros agora***, meaning sleep stuff, seems to fill the bill as far as the substance goes, there is

---

*Is this related to the ancient Greek word **agora**, meaning open place or market? —well, the ancient Greeks didn't have any parking lots . . . so maybe that's where *they* sold it. . . .

another word suggested which seems equally to fill the bill as far as the vegetable goes; and this is a Persian word, given as "**merg-domia**, or man-like plant." Now one of the striking things about the mandrake plant, or about anyway one kind of plant called mandrake, is that it *is* man-like: that is probably what started much of the excitement, that *it looks like a man* . . . a bit, anyway . . . it doesn't wear a dark suit and a white shirt? All right, so it *does*n't wear a dark suit and a white shirt. Hoyts *you?* No one ever went to jail for trying to sell smack to a mandrake root. It's got *legs*, hasn't it? Does a turnip have legs? Do poets go around writing, "Get with child a turnip root?" or, "Not poppy nor turnip-juice nor—?" No.

Now, nice old Mr. Thompson writes, "It was certainly looked upon by the ancients as something more than a mere plant, and appears to have been generally regarded as the embodiment of a demon or evil spirit." Well . . . "generally" is a big word. Let us say, "sometimes," or "not seldom." But did the ancients, those convenient people in whose name we moderns pronounce all sorts of drivel and nonsense, did they use the mandrake to lay hexes or hoodoos? Not on your tin-type they didn't. They scoffed it up. They gobbled it down. Boiled it into soups and syrups. Believed it would bring good luck, reveal hidden treasure, help you make babies, and, incidentally (or, rather, *not* incidentally)—here I quote a modern ad for a patent medicine— "restore your lost nature and provide ambition." (Attention: *Men.*)

The Arabs seemed to be agreed that it was potent stuff, all right, but disagreed as to whether this was good or bad: some places they called it **al-tuphac al-shaitan,** the Apple of Satan; some they called it **abou ruhr,** Father of Life. You pays your camels and you takes your choice.

Now then for the exciting part, I am going to relate the most famous mandrake story of all, the story of the mandrake hunt—I say "hunt" and not "quest," advisedly. The first rule of thumb in hunting a mandrake is, *"Whoever digs it up, must die."* Got that? Okay, then; and don't say I didn't warn you. Another rule, this one from Theophrastus (and not the Renascence one, Theophrastus Philipus Aureolus Bombastus von Hohenheim, alias Paracelsus), Theophrastus the pupil of Plato warns that you have to stand so that the wind blows from you to the mandrake (the opposite of ordinary hunting rule) and not from the mandrake to you, which would be bad for your eyes. He also advised you to rub down with oil, because: if not, and the wind shifts, your body might swell up. There is a hint

of certain medical properties, in these last few words, upon which I forbear to dwell, because of mixed company and the youth of part of the audience. —Should I be telling you these things at all? Never mind, the mandrake is mentioned in the Bible, but in one instance (Genesis XXX, 14-16) the people were married, and in another (Song of Solomon VII, 13) it is clear that they were very much in love and had a meaningful relationship.

Very well, having stationed yourself upwind, now take your sword—you didn't know that you had to have a sword? Too bad, if you didn't know; run *get* one—and with it cut three circles around the plant. Keep your *face* turned away! When the Bible says the mandrakes "give forth an odor" it doesn't say it's a pleasant odor. So then what next? According to an ancient MS, after the swordsman cuts the second section, "he should dance around the plant and say many things possible about the mysteries of love." —I could have danced all night.

And by the way: no second-hand swords: virgin iron only, never used before. (And you wonder why this stuff is expensive!) —Oh yes! And while you're doing all this, *watch out for eagles!* I'm only telling you for your own good; you want to order this stuff from Sears, Roebuck, go ahead.

Meanwhile, back at the mandrake ranch. You will further protect yourself by eating garlic. Garlic is antiseptic. Against what? Everything. By now you will be reminding people of what the Duke of Wellington said about his soldiers: "I don't know if they terrify the enemy, but by God they terrify *me!*"

The next rule is, plug your ears. Good. Cotton will do, but better add wax or something such. Then say your prayers. Then take the dog—what do you mean, *what* dog? How do you expect to dig up a mandrake without a dog? True, jackasses might do, were known to have done; hence, one might suppose, an ox might, or horse or mule. But those cost more. People didn't think as much of dogs in the older times as we do now, and thought little of not feeding one for several days before this quest. Why? Well, you see, the dog is next tied to the lower part of the upper section of the mandrake. You go some distance away, and toss the dog some bread or meat or a bone.

The dog lunges forward.

The dog lunges forward.

In so doing he pulls up the mandrake, root and all.

The mandrake utters a fear shriek, a dreadful scream of agony. The mandrake sweats and bleeds. The mandrake dies.

So does, alas, the dog.

If you had heard the mandrake shriek, you, too, would die. But, first, you would have gone mad. Hence: the dog. —Now, you may ask, if you have plugged your ears so as not to hear (and let us do keep in mind that Ulysses had his men tie him to the mast and plug their ears so that he could hear the sirens' song and they could not, as they bent to their oars and rowed safely past the sirens' island: and you will recall Sir Thomas Browne's saying that "what song the sirens sang . . . is not beyond conjecture;" it may not be beyond conjecture, but I conjecture it could not be sung on television during prime time) —if you had plugged your ears and could not hear, how could you know that the mandrake shrieked? We will get to this . . . in time. Stick around.

Should you be, as I am, a dog-lover, you may think this a most unpleasant story. But you ain't heard *nuthin* yet.

The word **scientist**, not yet preceded by the word **mad**, did not in very former times imply the same degree of specialization as it often or usually does today. Dioscorides, a learned Greek, certainly merits the title: he was a botanist, and herbalist, probably a physician, certainly what we would call a pharmacologist today, as well. Here are some citations from him on the mandrake, in an old translation which I leave unmodernized, and it begins, bluntly, ". . . *being put up ye seat for a suppository it causeth sleep* . . ." Iago certainly did not have that particular method of administration in mind when he called mandragora, the medical extract of mandrake, a "drowsy *syrup*."

Dioscorides recommends the "new leaves" for eye inflammations, and ulcers and tumors; the root he says is good for erysipalis and "strokes of serpents . . . and it . . . assuageth ye pains of ye joints. . . ." Something else is good, too: "The seed of the mandrake's apples being drunk purgeth ye matrix" —I think the uterus is meant. Now, so far, so what? Old writers have written not reams but entire libraries on hundreds and thousands of plants being good for hundreds and thousands of ailments, and most of these remedies have fallen by the wayside. I suppose there must be multitudes which were said to have been good for eye inflammations, ulcers, tumors, snake-bite, erysipalis, pains in the joints, and female complaints: so what else is new? Read:

"Ye wine of ye bark is . . . cast into sweet wine . . . that there be given of it . . . to such as shall be cut" (that is, undergo surgery: *cut for the stone,* i.e., kidney-stone, remember?) "given . . . to such as shall be cut or cauterized. . . . For they do not apprehend the pain because they be overborn with dead sleep, but the apples being

smelled to or eaten are soporiferous," that is, cause sleep, "and ye juice that is of them. But used too much they make man speechless."

Now, do you dig this? Can you penetrate the old style of language to understand that someone writing in the early days of the Christian Era is describing an *anesthetic?*—I *will* modernize the old translation. Thus: First, mandragora used in a rectal suppository induced sleep. Second, if a patient about to undergo surgery drank it in sweet wine (the alcohol and sugar* as a preservative, or to disguise the taste), the patient would feel no pain, being overcome with deep sleep. Third, even smelling it, that is, inhaling it like ether or whatever, is sleep-inducing. . . .

Now, certainly he must have been wrong, old Dioscorides, or else such a medical marvel would *never* have fallen out of use. And we know that when ether and chloroform were invented, say about 150 years ago, they were hailed as something marvelous, wonderful, and new: and a new word, **anesthesia**, was invented by Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, to fit them. We have absolutely horrifying descriptions of operations being performed until then, with the patients fully conscious and screaming their heads off and sometimes dying of shock from pain. . . .

Well-remembered is the story of how, when Queen Victoria decided to have her second child delivered under anesthesia, it was denounced by some as an interference with the laws of nature and of God; and how opposition soon ceased when someone quoted from the Bible that, prior to the removal of Adam's rib, ". . . God caused a deep sleep to fall upon" him. Nowadays of course many women are choosing to have their babies by "natural childbirth" without anesthesia and some of them are glad they did and some are not. I recall "when I was a boy" that a popular childbirth anesthetic or anesthetic-type drug, which included scopolamine, was mellifluously called "twilight sleep." You might remember that.

Now, there are different kinds of plants, entirely different, called "mandrake," and the kind Dioscorides described a ways back he called "white mandrake," and said it was a male plant. Some believe this is the one now named *Mandragora vernalis*, or Spring Mandrake, and some believe it isn't. He also described "a sort called **morion** growing in shady places and about dens," but with smaller leaves; "which they say being drunk as much as a dragm," (a bit

*or, likelier, honey.

more than half an ounce) "or eaten with polenta," (that is to say mush or porridge) "it doth infatuate. For a man sleeps . . . sensible of nothing for three or four . . . hours. . . . And physicians use this when they are about to cut," (that is, operate) "or cauterize." And this is thought to be, perhaps, the *Mandragora autumnalis*, or, I guess, *Autumn* Mandrake.

There was in its day an enormously credited doctrine known as "the signature of plants." Liverwort, **-wort**, meaning plant, not **–wurst**, which means something else (and some prefer their liverwurst with sliced pistachio nuts, and some do not)—liverwort looked like liver . . . and so must be good for the liver complaint. Lungwort looked like lung: QED. Nature intended it so. Obviously, good for the lungs. I don't remember the doctrine being applied to mushrooms, but my memory isn't what it used to be.

Then there was the mandrake, and it looked like the entire human body, in that the root was often bifurcated, or forked, giving the appearance of legs; and sometimes the root divided further, and seemed to have arms *and* legs. In short, it looked like the entire human body, and so, it must be *good* for the entire human body. So . . . let's try it . . . *Wow!*

And if this description sounds a lot like ginseng, well, it might be said that, in a lot of ways, ginseng is the mandrake of the Far East I could quote from Chinese sources, I could quote from lots of sources—about, for example, how the Carthaginians, for example, left mandragorated wine behind once for the enemy to drink and returned and found them spaced out of their gourds, and—

But let's get back to you and your friends. Your dog has just pulled up a nice mandrake root and dropped dead, and you have just finished picking wax and cotton out of your ears and the mandrake has just finished bleeding to death—quietly, one must hope. So what do you do, now?

Well, you wash it. Is what you do. Some say in wine, some say in water; others say in mother's milk . . . but wash it you must. Gad, you'd better! Because I forgot to tell you that you were supposed, earlier, to have doused the damned plant either in the urine of a woman or in her catamenial, that is, menstrual, blood. I am not sure why, except that both substances were age-old items in folk-medicine and folk-magic. And still are; for one thing, you don't need a prescription, you don't even need to go the drugstore, for either; and you certainly don't require to sell your soul to the devil.

"First you must wash your mandrake . . ." Even without its having received the gross libation, well, the Orientals sometimes said

it grew only out of graves and sometimes the Occidentals said, only at the foot of the gallows. So figure it out—and you still ain't heard nuthin— When you have washed it and dried it, next you wrap it, either in red or white silk, or in a piece of a shroud, or both, and now you have a great treasure.

The legend or lore of the mandrake has already begun to divide . . . much as the mandrake root itself divides. On the one hand we have the fairly rationalistic observations of a man like Dioscorides, who has described the plants and their possible properties so well that we can almost identify them with certainty. Besides the usual run of regular ailments—sore eyes, infections, rheumatism, etc.—*piles,* possibly—there are the less frequently spoken-of but, probably, no less frequently suffered-from ailments; lack of sexual desire and/or capacity, and barrenness or sterility. All too real.

But on the other hand we have the fairy stories east and west, of the magic mannikin which can do anything—the ancient world was, actually, far closer to the view of the 20th-century writer, Lytton Strachey, with his

> *Love's ultimate tenderness, while faint bliss*
> *With pale mandragora drowns the accomplished kiss . . .*

than to the ugly ignorance on the subject which characterized the medieval and renascence eras. For some time now many scholars have been trying to rehabilitate the Dark Ages; but, even if they were not so dark as we once thought, still, it is to the downfall of ancient science and scientific attitudes, primitive though *they* may seem, that we must look for the gradual eclipse of true knowledge of the mandrake and of mandragora. It may have taken a thousand years for ancient legends to obscure ancient facts, but obscure them they did.

So, eventually, the *shape* of the plant mandrake took possession of the minds of men. I have quoted elsewhere, and often, the words of George Eliot, "The rude mind with difficulty associates the ideas of power and benignity." Once it became fixed that the power of the mandrake rested in its manlike shape, its medical uses began to be forgotten. Once again, as the world ebbed into twilight, if not into absolute darkness, the always-precarious distinction between *magic,* and *medicine,* ebbed into the twilight with it.

I have spoken of *ugly* ignorance, and I know of few things uglier than the transformation implied by the change of name from the

Greco-Latin **mandragoras** to the germanic **Galgenmännchen**, which has been translated as "little gallows-man." I have spoken of the belief that the mandrake grew under the gallows; this was a comparatively late belief, and it is my opinion that it was invented to explain the manlike shape. —And, who knows, perhaps, sometime or other someone did find one of the several kinds of plants called mandrake under a gallows-tree . . . or near one . . . or near the road to one . . . "*Enter* Rumor, *painted full of tongues.*"

Now, as I have told you a few times after telling you nasty things, "and you ain't heard *nuthin*," so I will tell you now that you are about to hear *sumthin*. It is very nasty indeed, and anyone who has a delicate mind or a delicate stomach may freely turn the page.

You know that bodies were often left hanging on the gallows until they rotted, as a warning. But it was not that European people believed, as the Chinese evidently did, that a decomposing corpse acted as fertilizer: no. Millions of people at one time apparently believed that if the man hanged for thieving came of a line of thieves (or if his mother, pregnant with him, had thefted something, or even thought of doing so), then a mandrake would grow beneath the gallows on which he was hanged. Why? Who knows why? How? I will explain how.

The process of being hanged by the neck until dead causes—how shall I put it? —causes various physical functions to take place. The body loses control. It breaks wind. Defecation takes place. Urination takes place. And if the body is that of a man, it is said that ejaculation may take place. I say "may," but in the dark days when witches and warlocks were burned alive for causing storms, people did not think in terms of "may." It was a *fact*. And to this the popular imagination added another stroke: the man did not even have to be "a hereditary thief." It was sufficient if he were a virgin.

And, as the late Willy Ley wrote, "while hanging from the gallows he will, as a polite mistranslation has it, discharge his urine (but the original says quite clearly, *aut sperma in terram effundit* [. . . even pour out his sperm on the ground]) and then a mandrake will spring up in that spot. . . ." Isn't *that* . . . something.

Perhaps a thousand people were hanged for theft for every one who was hanged for murder. And, as young men are as apt to steal as older ones, I suppose that some of them must have been virginal. As late as the 1800s and in England, so much more enlightened than so many other countries, boys as young as nine were hanged for crimes such as stealing a pen-knife. And in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries, in central Europe, the death of teen-aged boys upon

the gallows was likely not infrequent. Just suppose that, whatever the law of averages, now and then at least, one of these youngsters might be suffering the penalty and pains of death for having stolen some bright trifle or trinket in order to (he might have hoped) win the favor of a girl he liked. —What thoughts must have been in the minds of the people who went to watch hangings the way people today watch television.

In one of Kipling's poems he says, as vividly as though he were there,

> . . . at the gallows,
> Beneath the wry-necked dead,
> Sat a leper, and his woman,
> Very merry, breaking bread . . .

What a marvelous invocation of the atmosphere of the not-always-marvelous Middle Ages!

Imagine, too, if you can, what thoughts in the minds of the people, who afterwards scanned the ground beneath that hideous engine, in hopes of sighting a sprouting and promising plant. I remember in my childhood seeing middle-aged and older women, peasants transplanted to America, kerchiefs on their heads and knives or trowels in hand; bent over, in the springtime, seeking dandelions to dig up for making salad or wine. So might their ancestresses, in some instances, have dug for mandrakes.

John Donne, in a skeptical mood, invites us to

> Go, and catch a falling star,
> Get with child a mandrake root . . .

But in John Donne's time skepticism was not the mood. The seeker after the wonderful mannikin which grew in the ground and whose ownership brought good luck and wealth and power, such a person did not carry with him botanical pictures to help him distinguish between *Mandragora officinarum, Mandragora vernalis* or *autumnalis*, etc. How would he know a mandrake, from say, a horseradish? Why, he would know a mandrake, of *course* he would know a mandrake, because . . . well, because it *looked* like one! And there were never lacking people to invoke those grand old principles, Supply and Demand, Business is Business, Give the Customer What He Wants, Find a Need and Fill It, and Never Give a Sucker an Even Break. There weren't enough mandrakes? (There weren't.) No Prob-

lem. *Make* some.

Manufactured mandrakes could, I suppose, be divided into many categories; but as I tend not to be fond of categories, I'll cut it down to two, which I will call Eastern and Western. But first let us listen to what we might call the sales-pitch; this one comes from central Europe in the 1500s. "Henceforth you will have no enemies; you can never be poor, and if you have no children you will have your quiver full of them. . . . Would you be rich? All you need is to lay a piece of money beside the mandrake one night and next morning you will find the coin doubled."

Who could resist? One way of faking was to offer any root plant which tended to have forked roots, and one such plant is the briony. I've seen a picture of a root of the black briony. It was 16 inches long, had a head of sorts where a human head would be, very distinct "legs," and, what is more, a tail! It was given as a gift to an Oxford professor by a workingman, who "believed it to be a mandrake and highly valued it for its magical potency." The date of this gift? Nineteen-sixteen! —that is, only seven years before I was born. Besides briony, other plants sometimes produced human- or humanoid-shaped roots. They had no medicinal properties, but they were neither bought nor sold for that: they were sold and bought for their *magical* properties, which consisted in two items: one, their shape; two, the belief that they *had* magical properties.

But still there were not enough naturally-shaped roots of whatsoever plants to go around. So the majority of the fake mandrakes were artificially shaped. Briony seemed to lend itself to this, anyway; iris was also used (this is the "orris-root" of commerce, and it does have a pleasant smell); the yellow gentian also was used, so were lilies and even briony's cousin, the yellow beet, and various reeds and canes. *How* were they "artificially shaped?" A quack doctor in Rome, in the 16th century, falling sick, had the good sense not to believe in his own quackery, and went to a hospital. There he was treated by the learned physician Andrea Methioli, a student of the works of Dioscorides (who, you will remember, wrote fairly scientific descriptions of the true mandrake plants). The quack recovered and, considering the standards of even ethical medicine in those days, the recovery was likely more good luck than good management.

(A minister told me, years ago, that once, after a wedding he had performed, the new husband took him aside and said, "Preacher, I don't have no money left to pay you, but I read meters for the utility company, and if you come down to the cellar with me I'll show you how to fix yours so you won't have to pay hardly anything." Just so

was the quack's idea of how to show his gratitude, and he informed the authority on the real mandrake how to make fake ones.)

Quote: "Those roots which resemble the human form which certain impostors and rogues bear about for sale to deceive unfertile women are artificially made from the roots of reeds, briony, and other plants. They carve out those while still growing, planting in them grains of barley or millet in those places in which they wish hairs to grow, and then making a trench, they cover them with fine sand until those grains put forth roots, which will happen in the space of 20 days at most. They dig them out at last, and cut the roots which have sprung from the grains and shape them so as to resemble the hair of the head, the beard, and other hairs of the body.

"These false mandrakes be palmed off on childless women, some of whom gave him as much as 5, 20, or even 50 gold pieces to become joyful mothers of children." —Sometimes, of course, they *did*. And then, guess where the credit went?

It is ironical, and I wish I had a stronger word, that, long ago, in Austria, it was not unknown for vendors of *Galgenmännchen,* "genuine mandrakes found beneath the gallows," to be hanged upon the gallows themselves, for selling what were discovered to be counterfeits.

Mandrake vendors—or, at least, *one* mandrake vendor—even reached the Holy Roman Emperor, Rudolph II, a man who was interested in all forms of contemporary science (including, of course, alchemy, astrology—and mandrakes): he bought two of them, and, being nobody's fool, insisted that one be male and one be female. Then he put them in charge of his Imperial librarian. Perhaps the librarian felt restless at the responsibility, perhaps he had other reasons; at any rate he complained that the mandrakes shrieked and howled, to such an extent that they prevented him from sleeping, because they were not regularly bathed in wine! One hopes that the matter was promptly taken care of. At any rate, at last report, they were still in the Imperial Library. (Perhaps the librarian *drank* the wine! *That* would help him sleep!)

So much, for the moment, anyway, about the Western variety of, so to say, forged mandrakes. Now, as for the Eastern—

Early in the last century an Arab or Turkish employee of a French official in North Africa told his employer that there was in the desert an entire city whose inhabitants had in ancient time been turned to stone as a punishment for sin. When the French official asked for proof, and offered a good sum of money for one of these petrified men, his employee muttered, looked dark and doubtful, and then

disappeared. He returned a few days later, asked if the offer still held good—and it did—then said, "I did not dare bring you a full-grown man who had been turned to stone, but I have brought you a child." And he opened his sack and produced what we might call a cherub, carved out of marble during the later days of the Roman Empire in North Africa, from the ruins of one of whose colonial cities he had abstracted it. Not only had the *art* of sculpture been lost, following the Moslem conquest of the area, the very conception of it had been lost.

Although, so far as I know, the production of false mandrakes no longer continues in Europe, it evidently does go on in the Near East, or perhaps one should say the Middle East; and, if it doesn't, it anyway continued to go on there longer than it did in Europe, with Turkey and Syria being the chief places of manufacture. Now, it is well-known that the Moslem religion forbids the making of graven images, and in consequence sculpture scarcely exists in Moslem countries. However, this ban *may* not apply to the making of images, not of stone or metal, but of, to be simply truthful, vegetation —although of course wooden statues or statuettes are under the interdict. Why should it be lawful, however, to allow images, however small, to be graven out of roots? I am not an authority on the Moslem theology, but I would guess that the answer lies in the circumstance that, in large part, these faked mandrakes were not recognized as being faked. It was assumed that they simply *grew*.

However, they *don't*. Thompson says, "sometimes the desired shape is imparted simply by cutting and pressing the roots while they are still fresh and juicy." (One might say, *pliant*.) "When a root has thus been moulded it is sometimes buried in the ground again, until the scars have healed and the parts that have been tied together have coalesced." And thus we see that this method does not differ very much from the old European method; however:

Thompson quotes one Von Luschan as saying, ". . . surprising results are obtained by carefully digging out the living plant and preparing the root by binding it with thread, then by cleaving, incising, scratching and bandaging, after which it is replanted so that it can continue to grow for some time." This last is, we should remember, also one of the very same techniques revealed by the quack mandrake-maker to the physician in Italy, several hundred years ago. Von Luschan goes on, "Only after the different abrasions and wounds are grown over is the root again dug out, and when it has become shrunken and quite dry, it is often difficult to distinguish the artificially modified parts. A clever artist will thus produce the

little figures which look entirely natural and whose genuineness no one would suspect."

It would or should be fairly easy, though, to distinguish European from Asian, that is, Western from Eastern, faked mandrakes. For one thing, the Europeans tried more to mould the roots whilst conserving the, shall I say, *root*iness; the Eastern makers tried more to impart such details as eyes, noses, mouths, fingers. The Western fakers, remember, planted grains in the roots so as to allow them to grow into the semblance of hair; the Easterners, instead, chiseled or scratched appropriate places on the roots so as to *look* like hair. And then, too, it is very likely that entirely different plants supplied the roots used in the different continents, but I have not been able to learn the names of those favored in the Middle East.

I have not seen, either, any mention in the Middle East of the ugly and disgusting legend of the "little gallows-men." And, in fact, Moslem law does not prescribe hanging as a penalty for theft. In Saudi Arabia, for example, for a first offense, a thief's right hand is cut off; for a second offense, they cut off his left hand. I am, under these circumstances, unable to say how a thief would manage to commit a *third* offense; but thieves can be very wily, as well as very stupid; and the third offense, if one occurs, is punished by cutting off his head. Where such laws are enforced with full rigidity the results are, as might be expected, that theft is either not prevalent, or thieves grow mighty skillful.

The Moslem world, too, had its (so to speak) Dark Ages, although they came later; and followed the Mongol incursions and the Turkish conquests. Greek books ceased to be translated into Arabic; and, thus, Greek science ceased to be disseminated across the Arab/Moslem world; the light of secular learning flickered and went out. Knowledge of the mandragora as medicine vanished from Asia Minor, from Babylon, Syria, Arabia and from the circumjacent countries, as surely as it had vanished from Europe: all the might of the mandrakes now consisted in their shapes. And what *was* this might? Here again I quote Thompson.

"The properties and powers ascribed to them are not always the same. Some are believed to protect the owner against blows, thrusts, and shot; while others are said to be infallible and efficacious aphrodisiacs." (Not, mind you, by taking them as medicines, but simply through having them.) "There are also those that are said to render the wearer invisible or to indicate the spot where treasures lie hidden," (this was also said in Europe, remember?) "and possess at the same time the valuable property of absorbing the disease of a wearer

who may be sick. But there is a curious superstition that in the latter virtue lies danger, for the root can also transmit the disease to a new owner." This last does remind me of an old saying about the medical properties of whisky, from the days when *all* whisky was hundred proof: *It's good for what ails you, and if you ain't got it, it'll give it to you. . . .*

Now I think we will leave the manufactured mandrake, and return, as best we can, to the matter of the *real* mandrake's *real* medical properties: although "as best we can" cannot, I am afraid, be very good. We recall that as late as the time of Shakespeare, it was known that mandragora, like opium, was a powerful narcotic. Why, then, had it ceased to be used as an anesthetic during surgery? This question, so easily asked, is not so very easily answered. One might equally well ask, why had *opium* ceased to be used for such purposes? My answer is simple: I simply do not know. A possibility occurs to me, that there was probably a difficulty in regulating the dosage; this was always a problem; sometimes perhaps there was trouble with impurities, and sometimes with *purities*. Even today deaths do occur, and Janis Joplin's is said to be one of them, because people who are used to taking a diluted form of heroin cannot survive an equal amount of undiluted heroin. In that prophetic work, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, you will recall, Dr. Jekyll learned too late, in his search for a purer and yet a purer form of the unnamed drug which brought about the immense changes in his personality, that it had been the *impurity* in the original doses which worked the changes. (Let us reflect, too, upon the possibility, amounting almost to probability, that Stevenson wrote that very book under the influence of medically prescribed cocaine, which was said in those days of its early discovery to cure tuberculosis. And there is yet a paradox in *this*: first, cocaine does *not* cure tuberculosis, it does not in fact "cure" anything, it just makes you feel so good that addicts often die of diseases they didn't know they even had, because they felt so good; and, second, Stevenson, we now know, did not actually have tuberculosis.)

However, during the latter days of the 19th century, certain scientific investigators were drawn to those old texts, and began to investigate, in scientific manner, the ancient claims for mandragora. The Inquisition charged Joan of Arc with, among other things, having kept a mandrake in her bosom. She denied it. But they burned her anyway. Four hundred years later the mandrake was being kept in the laboratories of pharmacologists, and the Inquisition likely would have burned *them*, too, had it not been abolished, a mere

seventy years earlier. What did these investigators learn? Astonishing things.

Almost 90 years ago a Dr. Richardson went to the trouble of doing as Dioscorides had done, that is, he obtained mandrake from Greece; he did not exactly mix it with wine, but with a stronger alcohol, diluted with water. First he tried it on pigeons, then, encouraged by the results, on rabbits. I quote: "He administered this tincture of mandragora either by the mouth or by subcutaneous injection. . . . The effects . . . were those of narcotism . . . paralysis of motion and sensation, excitement during recovery if the dose were not fatal, and sleep and paralysis if the dose were too potent." Taking all proper precautions, Richardson finally tried it upon humans. "In doses not sufficient to produce actual narcotism, the symptoms induced were desire for sleep . . . and a singular restless and nervous excitability closely akin to hysteria." And what do we all know about hysteria? That hysterical people scream . . . or, to use another term, *shriek*. And here it *is*, Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*.

> "And shrieks like mandrakes torn out of the earth, that living mortals, hearing them, run mad."

Well, this is very close to the truth, isn't it? There is, however, one tremendous error. It was not the *mandrake* which shrieked, it was those who had taken an improperly prepared dosage of the extract of mandrake, or mandragora, who shrieked, as they were regaining consciousness. And, if the dosage were even stronger, though not stronger enough to produce death, they might indeed "run mad." Our own age has a term for that. It could be a bum trip, man.

The medical names for those substances extracted from mandragora by Richardson and his successors Ahrens, Thoms, and Wentzel, are hyoscyamine, hyoscine, and scopolamine. They are obtainable, we now know, from other plants as well; and are, I believe, at present synthesized in manufacturing-laboratories. Some of them are to be found in non-prescription drugs used for sleep—hyoscyamine, for one. It is no longer necessary to kill a dog, smear one's-self with oil, use a sword, or search beneath a gallows in order to obtain the true, as distinct from the false, benefits of mandragora. It also seems to be the case that everything now obtainable from the mandrake root is now obtainable in better form from other sources. Anesthesiologists have passed beyond the need for mandragora. Its new dawn was brief indeed.

I was born in 1923 in the Yonkers Homeopathic Hospital. I used to wonder what the homeopathic method for parturition might have been, and I still do not know; homeopathy was by then in its decline, and it was using all sorts of methods outside its original system. I have mentioned that, at the time of my birth, a system of semi-anesthesia was in fashion, called "twilight sleep." The basis of this was the drug morphine, derived from the opium poppy, and the drug scopolamine—obtainable, to be sure, from other sources, but obtainable nonetheless from mandragora. I never asked my Mother; and now it is too late; but it is at least certainly possible that I came into the world under, so to speak, the auspices of the mandrake.

Which might explain an awful lot.

SOLUTION TO TANYA HITS AND MISSES
(from page 37)

"Because, dummy," said Tanya, "you wouldn't have said three out of the first five planets had life forms unless the fifth were one of them. If the fifth were barren, you'd have said three out of the first *four*. Do you know how many planets there are altogether?"

"I do," nodded the colonel. "And I also know how much you like puzzles, so let me put it this way. There are more than seven planets."

"Go on," said Tanya, who had found a pencil and a piece of paper on the computer's console.

"Counting from the star, the first, second, and sixth planets are barren."

Tanya wrote it down, then looked up.

"The eighth planet, counting the other way, from the outermost planet toward the star, is also barren."

"And . . ." said Tanya, holding up the pencil.

"And between the sixth planet from the star, and the eighth planet from the other end, there are just three planets. All three have life forms."

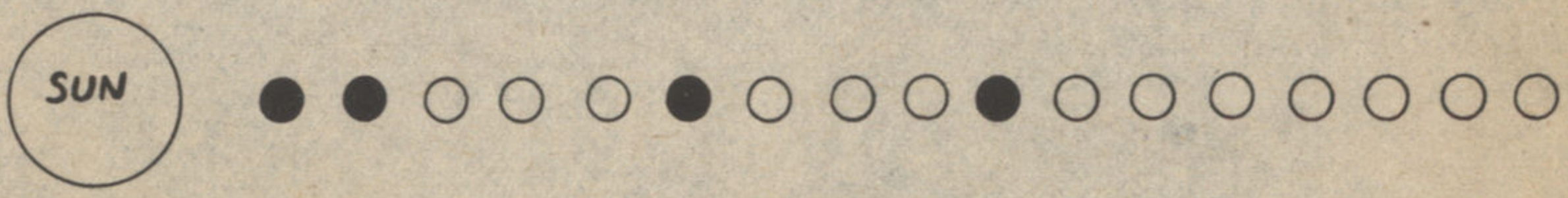
Tanya made the sketch shown in Figure 1, shading each planet she assumed was barren. "It's trivial," she said. "Obviously there are seventeen planets. I know four are barren, and I know six have life, but you haven't told me anything yet about the outside seven."

Colonel Couth chuckled couthly. "Your answer is wrong, my dear," he said. "But I haven't told you one more thing. There are fewer than fifteen planets in the system."

"That's impossible!" the girl exclaimed.

"No," said her father. "But you'll have to give it some more thought."

Tanya puzzled over her diagram for ten minutes or so before the **aha!** insight struck her. How many planets are in the system? Try not to give up before you consult page 85.



HALFWAY

by Sharon Farber
and Dorothy Smith

art: Broeck Steadman

"Dorothy Smith" is the penname of an electrical engineer who lives in the San Francisco Bay area. Although she lives in Berkeley, she works in Marin County, where the streets are thick with Porsches and runners, but no one ever walks. She reports no previously published fiction, with the possible exception of certain technical documents.

Allie ran upon a narrow yellow strip that made a swaybacked bridge, curving up and over the flowing stars. The nightside of Earth hung darkly off to her right, sunset corona over the Pacific. The waxing moon spun at her left, and a few solar collectors could be glimpsed tagging along in synchronous orbit behind the station. Elsewhere was just oblivion and the stars, some passing underfoot at ten times her running speed.

The clear, plastic, outermost skin of Halfway Station held a thin patina of dust, causing the stars to sparkle as they slid by her on their circular path. Here and there the dust showed gaps, areas that had recently been cleaned after a visitor's embarrassment. The designers of the station had placed the opaque yellow strip down the center of the transparent zone in anticipation of the vertigo that would come from standing above the starry expanse. But they had failed to foresee the effects of the visible 3 RPM rotation and the one and a quarter gravity induced by the station's spin. Put bluntly, it made people sick.

See the stars and throw up, jibed the little voice within her mind. *Good thing you've got a strong stomach.*

Shut up, she told it. *I've had nothing but trouble from you lately.*

The voice was an old companion. Though disembodied and sexless, she sometimes thought of it as Cassander, Cassandra's twin brother, who had a talent similar to his better-known sister's. While Cassandra spoke of danger and no one would listen, you *had* to listen to Cassander but you wished that you hadn't. Cassander delivered sarcastic little truths that punctured happiness, the stuff of mildewing illusions and shattered peace of mind. Allie's most recent living arrangement had been sabotaged by the proddings of her inner voice. Her lover and roommate had been a lab tech ten years her junior. The voice had murmured: *How does he think of you? Are you good old Allie, graying but fun to be with? Or are you the distinguished Doctor Beach?*

It had turned out to be the latter, and that had ended that. Allie

had found her status-happy lover a good research position at the affiliated labs back on earth, waved tearfully as he left, and swore not to make a fool of herself again.

"Ha!" she said aloud.

The sound of her voice dragged her back from her reverie even as she left the peaceful black of the universe for the industrial green of the high-g corridors. Each unornamented panel was stamped with the rosette insignia of Killus Engineering, serving as a constant reminder of mortality. The overhead artificial light, supposed to resemble bright moonlight, made things seem ghastly and unreal. Allie had completed the three-quarter kilometer circumference of the observation deck, and was headed back along the High Road, the corridor that spiralled through the whole of Halfway Station.

The outermost deck rotated at one and a quarter times Earth gravity, which could be brought down to one-g by running opposite the spin. She passed the water tanks which served as both spin ballast and cosmic ray shielding, and the Deck 23 botany lab, where thousands of seeds were sprouting and orienting their roots to the "centrifugal gravity."

A crumpled newspaper lay in the corridor, discarded perhaps by someone nostalgic for city litter. Allie briefly contemplated picking it up, but stopping would result in a snap 25 percent weight gain, an unpleasant feeling. She left the paper for the janitors.

Halfway There: All the News That's Fit to Recycle

The BBC documentary team has finally left so we can all get off our worst behavior. Good manners might even be in order since our latest guest is eight-year-old Alexander Sterling, the first off-Earth live birth. Lex's father is Dr. Fred Sterling, the new Lunar Colony Coordinator; his mother is Dr. Mary James Sterling, lunar geologist; his host was our own Dr. Alexandra Beach.

After a while Allie reached the main living and working area, those decks rotating at or near one-g, standard Earth gravity. While most of the station slept, some activity continued here. Allie had to sidestep the occasional maintenance man, lab tech, or missile watcher. A master alloy mixer, weekending from one of the orbital factories, lay in an open doorway, evidently passed out while contemplating the flowers growing along the walls of the High Road. Allie almost ran into two of her researchers, necking in the corridor. Her surprise at finding them there must have shown on her face as she passed.

"Uh, hi, Dr. Beach," the woman called after Allie, sounding like a lawyer caught in a contradiction.

"And I thought they hated each other," Allie mused, already some distance from them. "Guess I'm not paying attention."

After nine years in this small biosphere, the intricacies of who was sleeping with whom had become routine and academic, and so were passing beneath her notice. The last time she had been this oblivious was at the university. Allie had always been aloof from the petty intrigues of the coed dormitory, busy with her studies and her dream of space, a dream shared by only a few. Jack had been one.

He'd been her next-door neighbor, an astronomy graduate student. His real name was Fred but he'd looked like Jack Armstrong the All-American boy, or perhaps a member of the Hitler Jugend, the only thing humanizing the image being a pair of warm brown eyes, like the eyes of a cocker spaniel. Allie could still see those eyes—and Jack, backlit by his study lamp, hugging a mug of tepid coffee and talking about pulsars.

Mary had also shared the dream. A crystallography grad, her favorite pastime was wrapping a spectroscope around a meteorite fragment. Allie's best friends. Serious. Studious. Made for each other, but how could she have known that?

Allie had inadvertently introduced them by asking Mary to water her plants while she was at a biochemistry conference. Returning a week later to find her friends married, she'd dug her nails into the palm of her left hand, thrust behind her back, while congratulating them with her right.

"So where were you when I needed you?" she asked her disembodied companion. Cassander remained silent.

Allie ran past the doorway to her residential corridor, where her run had started. She lived in Tarzania, named for the lush, almost impenetrable foliage the residents' committee had planted. Other corridors were also nicknamed for their vegetation—Hahvahd for its ivy-covered walls; The Farm for its edible decorations; Hashbury for its scraggly marijuana, bright morning glories, and flaming poppies.

Her apartment was the roomiest in Tarzania, luxurious digs befitting her post as Director of Biological Research, and a right royal mess. Allie neglected the daily dusting, never used the kitchen, allowed books and papers and a nine-year accumulation of junk to collect whither they would.

To our left we have the residence of Dr. Alexandra Beach, B.S., M.A., Ph.D., developer of the earliest gravitomimetic messengers, the pharmacologics which allowed mankind to colonize the Moon. Low

gravity, you may recall, results in negative pressure in the lower body, causing changes in fluid distribution. The gravitomimetic agents regulate fluid levels and cardiovascular tension, and fool the capillaries into maintaining a more tolerable blood distribution, doing away with the "full head," dizziness, slow reactions, nearsightedness, and stuffed nose familiar to the early astronauts. Later medications, also developed by Dr. Beach, made possible correction of the bone depletion brought on by calcium loss.

Dr. Beach is perhaps the most illustrious of the inhabitants of Halfway Station, and a glance inside her residence will confirm that she is unquestionably the most unkempt. Since she seems incapable of attracting lovers with greater cleaning skills than her own and since Shep, her pet spider, is no good at all with a dust mop, we must await some future archaeological dig to uncover the remains of last week's comics and last year's journals. Where, oh where are all our yesterdays? Probably in the pile on the coffee table.

Allie chuckled. A psychiatrist friend had once told her not to worry about hearing voices, as long as the voices had a sense of humor.

She padded past an open door on the 0.92-g hospital deck, and a bleary-eyed doctor came out and called her back. "What's up?" she asked, blowing out CO_2 and starting to feel fatigued now that she wasn't running. The stop had increased her weight from 38 kilos to 51, but that was still below her normal one-g weight of 56.

"What's up? I'm up," the man answered. "Babies feel obliged to arrive at barbaric hours. If we stopped maintaining normal circadian rhythms here, maybe they'd start arriving at convenient times, just by random chance. Of course, you're to blame for turning this place into a maternity ward."

"It's not my fault the first kid born on the Moon was undifferentiated protoplasm," she said. "Who's the host?"

"Stenographer from Receiving, Agnes. The trouble with host mothers is that no one feels grateful to the doctor and names their babies after him anymore. Come on in and see the little fellow."

She waited while he glanced in at the postpartum woman, who was combing out her long black hair and humming a song. Allie stared at an electronic map display, with moving lights showing the positions of all the factory and research satellites with respect to Halfway. The station hospital was supported by the nations and companies utilizing orbital facilities. Return trips to Earth were costly, as well as dangerous for the ill. A light in a lower orbit was blinking red.

"Guy loading an electrophoresis vat down at Teppei Pharma-

ceutical cut himself; they're bringing him over for suturing. You ever try to sew someone up in 0-g?" He used the zero-g workers' pronunciation, Og, as in *The Wonderful Land of Og*.

"On Earth a little blood spreads out and looks like a lot. In 0-g it pools around so you have to swim through to clamp the vein, or a pumping artery fills the room with red blobs. And by surface tension it crawls over the entire patient until he's all red and can suffocate in his own blood." He cheerily led Allie into the nursery. The neonate was sleeping soundly in his crib while the nurse readied a bottle.

"They always look ugly," Allie muttered.

"Nonsense. Old Papa Doc can look at the prune and predict the adult. He'll be blond and tall, like his parents. They're NASA personnel at Tranquillity."

"So the government pays the host fee?"

The doctor nodded. "Damn good money, though private deals go higher. You should try it again, but get paid this time. With the new immunologic meds, the chance of rejection's pretty low."

"No thank you," Allie said. "Having a kid is beneficial to the longterm metabolism, but one is as good as twelve." The phrase *too old* was left unsaid, at least aloud. She wished the doctor a good night and ran on uphill, thinking about hosting fees. If it were only possible to patent an idea, by now she could have retired on her share of the royalties. Not that retirement held any charms.

The Lunar colony had seemed doomed to failure with the coming to term of its first two pregnancies. As the pathologist had put it, with the macabre whimsy characteristic of the profession, the first fetuses had looked "like yesterday's turkey loaf." The event had been traumatic not just for the parents, but for all Lunar settlers. With the entire colonization program headed into chaos, Allie had acceded when Jack and Mary asked her to host their fertilized ovum. She'd even helped work out some of the procedures. (Not the important ones, Cassander would remind her, these being a few million years old.) What the hell, it would be good for her, good for them, and good for the space program. So for nine months, Allie had carried an alien fetus with no genes of her own.

Jack and Mary had named the baby Alexander, after her, and sent her pictures. They arrived like clockwork every Christmas and anniversary of the birth, the rapidly growing boy and the proud parents, Mary smiling vaguely, Jack with his dark eyes, their faces barely aging in the controlled environment and Lunar gravity.

Allie wondered if any of the other host mothers kept track of their

Lunar offspring. Probably not. Just a job, and much better for the psyche if you never saw the child.

She was traversing the decks faster now, as they grew shorter, approaching the inner Hub of the rotating station. Running against the rotation had cut the effective gravity down to 0.5-g. The ceilings were higher, and padded. Allie felt as if she floated. Sweat dropped down from her hair and fell to the floor. At the ramp into Deck 11 she reversed her direction, now running with the rotation, at almost one-g. Her heart rate increased temporarily to compensate for the sudden doubling of weight. "Hell of a workout for the ticker," she thought, feeling every step she took. She thought for a moment and discovered that she had long since run the 23,000 miles that separated North America from Halfway. *Are you working on the mileage back, or shall we shoot for the moon?*

The decks at these intermediate gravity levels were largely used for storage. Every couple of decks Allie ran by another of her laboratories—she had one of the few jobs necessitating commuting between all of the levels. She was studying animal development in different gravities, as well as supervising the breeding of plant strains adapted to low gravity. Her coup was the stumblebee—a stingless bee able to function at lunar gravity, with varieties used in the botany labs and air regeneration areas of Halfway.

She passed another of her labs on Deck 5, at around four-tenths Earth gravity. Someone had written "Flash and Dale were here" on a wall near a footprint left by a foam-pourer. The only sign of life on an otherwise deserted deck was an unoccupied web. In a few years the corridor would be full of people setting off for, or returning from, Titan. A few more years after that and it would need expanding, additional corridors added to house the colonists temporarily away from their homes. Titan—nine months through cold space, accompanied by pulseless stars, then a new world, a new night sky. . . .

As she approached the level which approximated Lunar gravity, the decks resumed a lived-in appearance, with scarred walls, candy wrappers, graffiti. Allie poured on the speed, running past Jack's door. *The door to the living quarters of Dr. Sterling, the Lunar Colony Coordinator,* her inner voice corrected. Jack had visited the station last month, when they confirmed his new position, but this would be his first fortnight on Halfway. Two weeks on Luna, two weeks here, two weeks with Mary, two weeks . . .

Allie halted, weight plummeting from one-half to one-sixth, as the High Road ended in an airlock. A plastic observation window

in the lowered ceiling showed the tube to the Hub, the zero-g area for cargo storage and, of course, more labs. A few shuttles glinted in their hangars, including the Lunar shuttle which had carried Jack in this morning—no, the previous morning. Staring up at the Hub, Allie saw her faint reflection staring back. Her face seemed redder than the run alone would justify. Or was it her imagination?

You're blushing. A confirmation.

She'd been glad to see Jack last month, both as an old friend and as a new face to relieve the monotony of a routine and closed environment which was attenuating her emotions. Even the ending of her long research project could only inspire mild annoyance.

She'd hugged Jack, and had been surprised to find herself kissed in return. *The Moon must be pretty boring too.*

"Hi, Jack, welcome to Halfway House, the only place in the Solar System with a levity gradient," she'd said. He had answered with their old joke: "You will fly this space station to Havana." Then he told her about his new job, arm around her waist the whole time.

"They've finally retired that old crock Maxwell back to Terra Firma, thank God. He was never on Luna long enough to get acclimated—we won't have to pension him there—but how could he expect to know our priorities or effectively represent us?"

"Sounding like an administrator already," Allie commented.

"I'll avoid the conflict by commuting," Jack had continued. Contemplation of the future gave his All-American face the glow that was supposedly reserved for pregnant women.

Allie had ventured, "But won't you miss your research?"

He'd grinned. "Research? That's woman's work."

She had forced a return smile, then told him to be careful. "You're a new boy. Someone's bound to challenge you to a game of pool. Coriolis throws off your game until you adapt. Mary would never forgive me if I let her husband lose his shirt."

Jack had gone on to his meetings then, and Allie to a circuit of her labs, to oversee the end of a nine-year project. Packing crates full of rats, cats, and monkeys born and raised entirely on the station were stacking up in corners, waiting for pick-up. The rats were in their umpteenth generation, few of the original station-born cats were around, but the monkeys were just entering their prime. A shame that most of the animals were being sent down to Earth to be sacrificed and studied in minute detail. The one-g control group, the Lunar-g group, the zero-g group, and those from all groups who had been subjected to changes in gravity field at different stages of growth and pregnancy, as well as various drug and nutrition se-

quences—all were to be compared to control animals raised Earthside.

Allie had met Jack again at dinner, at a table stuffed with administrators and bureaucrats and even a few dignitaries from Downhome. As a formal occasion, they had all worn their finery, the zero-g representatives their huge industrial diamonds, the Luna dwellers their heavy jewelry handmade from native ores. Station-grown flowers and vegetables had graced the table.

That dinner conversation last month had been unimportant—the second homicide of the year had happened earlier that week and was still being discussed. A com-tech had been issued a defective safety line by the supply clerk, his ex-lover. The technician had drifted into the microwave beam path. Service to Earth had been momentarily interrupted.

A more important topic had been the zero-g web-building contest between spiders representing Acme Ball Bearing and General Crystalline. Other diners had consulted Allie, not because she had brought up the first spiders to counter the fly invasion (the station was also burdened with earwigs and cockroaches, opportunists determined to follow mankind everywhere), but because G.C.'s contender, Oscar of B-Deck, was offspring of Halfway champion fly catcher Danielle Webster and Allie's Shep. The chief of medical services, who was also the Champion of the Halfway Pedigreed Spider Association, had leaned over the table to remind Allie that she was two years behind on her dues.

She had shrugged. "I'll drink to that."

Jacobson, in charge of the Land of O-g computer network, had offered the traditional first toast: "Here's to Killus Engineering; they haven't yet, God bless 'em."

The only part of the evening she remembered clearly after that was a waitress dropping a tray of salads and catching them as they fell. Otherwise the meal was a haze of champagne and toasts, of Earth dwellers struggling with low-g dining, of uncomfortable small talk with stuffed shirts and ever looser reminiscences with Jack, his leg settling beside hers halfway through the meal. Then memories of helping him locate the guest quarters, of finding the short cuts very amusing, and of waking the next morning to realize she'd never made it home the night before. Jack had stirred, opening his dark eyes, and noticed her holding a head unaccustomed to so long at Lunar-g. She had been listening for her friendly, ironic-companion voice; but there was only silence instead of sarcasm. Her chest felt tight.

"What's wrong?" Jack had asked. His overnight case, open on a chair, had showed clean socks and framed pictures of his family.

"Just a hangover," Allie had lied. "We don't age as slowly as you do Upthere. We look and feel our age."

"Nonsense," he had lied in return.

Allie stood looking out at the Hub, watching the medical transport shuttle from Teppei Pharmaceuticals thread the needle to the hangars. She wondered if Jack was attracted by memories of what she had been, what they could have been together, or by her current status and reputation. After all, it would have been tacky for the new Lunar Colony Coordinator to tumble a shipping clerk.

Last Tuesday in the lab, Allie had received a call from Mary, on Luna. "She knows," Allie had thought, panicking, and had donned her big lab goggles to make her expression unreadable. But Mary had been blissfully ignorant, just a wife wanting to thank an old friend for hospitality to a traveling husband.

"I have a surprise," Mary had told her. "Remember you told me once how, when you were a kid, you read every Oz book except one, and you used to search for it in every library and book store you passed?"

"Right, *The Emerald City of Oz*. I built up quite a mystique around it, convinced myself it would give directions for getting there and all sorts of other secrets of the universe."

"Well, we saw it advertised in an old book catalogue. You should get it any day now."

"On behalf of the kid inside, I thank you."

Mary had continued, hesitantly asking Allie to help Jack get settled in his new quarters. Agreeing politely, Allie had invented a kinetics run which required her immediate attention. After breaking the connection she had sat and shook and wondered how Mary could be so blind and she so stupid. "I won't make a fool of myself again," she'd said aloud, causing a research associate to raise an eyebrow.

But Cassander still kept quiet.

At uncomfortable times like that, she contemplated returning to Earth and wondered if she missed it. Walking between the tidemarks at sunset, limestone cliffs and crashing waves hiding the sight and sound of the nearby highway, hers the only footprints in the sand. Lying in a hammock in the middle of a redwood forest, the air warm and still, diffuse sunlight mottling the pages of a book. Standing on Twin Peaks watching fog bury all but the topmost red spires of the Golden Gate Bridge, wind in her hair, billowing coat, the entire

romantic mirage. You couldn't live on a planet for three decades without being touched by it, but return? The forest was subdivided; the hill, condominiums; the empty beaches had tarballs on them. She didn't need a disembodied voice to tell her that.

Brooding in her lab, Allie had realized with a shock that none of those images included other people. Her fondest memories of the mother planet encompassed solitude.

She had heard a soundless whisper, *I vant to be alone,* followed by a ludicrous image of herself as Garbo, posing dramatically. Allie had burst out laughing, and the research associate had raised the other eyebrow.

She hadn't realized what she'd gotten into, or the magnitude of Jack's intentions. He had shown up the previous morning, luggage and child in tow.

"It's vacation time, and Mary decided she would rather nursemaid an exciting new experiment than her son," Jack had explained. "Lex, this is your Aunt Alexandra."

The eight-year-old had gazed at her uncertainly out of light blue eyes so unlike Jack's. To a Lunar child, relatives were names on letters and packages. Finally he had volunteered, "Mommy says you made the pills 'n' stuff we gotta take all the time."

"I invented the basic form."

"Yucch."

"The chocolate pills aren't so bad, are they?" his father had asked. "And only the little babies mind the shots."

"Oh, shots're okay." Still, he obviously did not trust the person who had thought them up. Allie had made peace with him by letting him play with the First Deck lab cat and her recent kittens. The calico had, through sheer force of personality, advanced from experiment to mascot, and was one of those not intended for return to Earth and dissection. Lex had played with single-minded, world-excluding intensity.

Jack had said apologetically, "I have an urgent meeting today. Can you mind him for a bit?" She had not known how to refuse.

The boy's constant questions had been a nuisance, as was catering to his needs. Allie had long suspected that a child would be more demanding on her time than ten labs; a day with Lex was confirmation. His presence had tied Allie to the Lunar gravity level as strongly as if she had been acclimated to it. She had set up shop in the lab, plowing through papers accumulated over the last nine years, while Lex, finally, had napped on the couch, curled up in a fetal position. His sleeping features bore an odd look of concentra-

tion. Allie had found herself smiling at him.

On the trip taking Lex back to his father, the boy had yelled, "Ooh, what's wrong with her?" It was a pregnant woman.

"She's a host mother," Allie had explained. "A, uh, mommy and daddy down on Luna decide to have a baby, and they ask the host mother to grow it for them."

How do loonies have babies? They check into a hotel and call womb service. Allie winced and fought down a giddy sensation. It's the low-g, she told herself. *Uh-huh.*

The rest of the trip had been verbal fencing, with Allie trying to avoid explaining the birds and the bees. It had been a relief to return the boy to Jack.

The Teppei Pharmaceuticals transport completed the docking. Allie said aloud, "I'm not his mother. No matter what Jack hopes I'll feel . . ." And then she heard, *That's right.* ***Captain's Paradise.***

Allie stood still for a long moment. Then she walked over to an intercom and punched a number.

"Library."

"Connie? This is Dr. Beach."

"Oh, hi, Doctor. What can I do for you?"

"A bit of a silly whim," said Allie. "Could you look up a film for me in a filmgoer's guide? It's an old one called *Captain's Paradise.*"

"Sure. Just a sec," came the reply. Allie heard the sound of rapid typing. The data retrieval system was nearly instantaneous, the biggest delay being the quarter-second light lag between Halfway and earth.

"Here we are. *The Captain's Paradise,* 1953. British. Eighty minutes. Three stars. Anthony Kimmins, Alec Guinness, Yvonne de Carlo, Celia Johnson, Bill Fraser. Guinness had a field day as a carefree skipper who shuttles back and forth between wives in opposite ports. DeCarlo and Johnson make good contrasts as the two women.' "

"That's it?"

"Yep. Anything else I can do?"

"No, I guess not," Allie replied. "Thanks."

"Uh, Dr. Beach?" said Connie hesitantly. "Before you go . . ."

"Yes?"

"This book of yours, *The Emerald City of Oz.* Are you finished with it?"

"Yes," said Allie. "I read it the day it arrived. I left it with the library for safekeeping. It's moderately rare and I lose things a lot."

"Well," continued Connie, "the reason I ask is, do you want it

stored at Halfway? We could ship it to one of the warehouse satellites and still have two-day retrieval. We're cramped here, but if you want to read it again anytime soon, I can find some room . . ."

"No," said Allie. "I don't think I'll be reading it again. It's an okay book, but nothing worth waiting a quarter century for."

"Beg pardon?"

"Dead storage is fine," Allie said. "Whatever's convenient. Thanks for everything." She snapped off the intercom and slumped against the wall.

Jack's intentions seemed clear now. He lived very comfortably on the Moon with his son's mother. Now that he must spend half his time on Halfway station, he wanted to spend it with his son's host mother. By bringing little Alex aboard, Jack hoped to make Allie realize her ties to the father and son. And Mary, immersed in her motherhood and her research into Lunar origins, might never notice what was happening, or if she did, might not take offense. A field day indeed.

"Damn!" Allie cried, and smacked her palm against the plastic, leaving a smudge that interfered with the view of the Hub.

Shoulders drooping, she walked back downhill, finally stopping at Jack's door. He answered her buzzing in a minute, still clothed but rubbing his eyes. He had evidently fallen asleep while waiting for her to show up. Allie hated being so predictable.

"Hi. I was running by and noticed your light was on." A patent lie; no light could seep under the pressure-sealed doors.

"I was just reading. So you still run?"

"It's handy after a day in the lab. Lets me sort things out and put them in perspective." She stood uncomfortably, wondering if there were people who always knew what to say. "Look," she said. "I'm hot and sweaty. I must smell. Let me just pop into your shower." She went into the bathroom and punched in her number before using the water. *Some scandalmonger in Accounting will probably notice and have a good snicker. Maybe he and Connie will compare notes.*

When she emerged, wearing his bathrobe, her running clothes stuffed in one large pocket, Jack had shut the door to the child's room and was opening a bottle of imported California wine. He put it down, came over to her; and they kissed. She opened an eye, and found herself staring into his, centimeters away.

"Your eyes," Allie said. "They're really blue!"

"Gray, actually," he said, puzzled. "Why?"

"Nothing important," she said, wondering about an image that had haunted her for sixteen years. She sat down in a chair, forcing

him to take the couch alone. She poured a glass of wine and held it, just smelling the bouquet.

"How was your day?" asked Jack.

"Played my old Ry Cooder album today," she said.

"You still have that? With 'School Is Out'? I remember—I was walking through the quad the day you finished your thesis, and I heard it blaring out your window."

"It was my favorite song. Seems to have gotten scratched somehow. It just sat there today skipping, 'school is out at last, at last,' over and over again, unable to finish the song."

She took a sip of wine. "After a while I smashed the record.

"My research is completed as of today. We were waiting for confirmation from Earthside and it just came in. It was a wild-goose chase and we caught the wild goose. There is no fetal development problem in sub-optimal gravity.

"The real trouble was replicating the original undifferentiation effect. All our fetuses kept coming out normal. We finally nailed it as a combination reaction of alcohol, plus a metabolite of one of the early gravitomimetics, and the use of centrifuging to inhibit bone decalcification. Quite a find from an academic point of view. Triple synergies are hard to pin down. Anyway, the last two are no longer used, so there's no bar to full Lunar pregnancy. I think that our report will make host mothers obsolete. Me too, maybe. I've spent years pursuing a fluke that never should have happened."

"You should be elated. You've eliminated the only real barrier to eventual Lunar self-sufficiency," Jack said. "Man can populate the Solar System. Cheer up—I'm sure you have other projects you can devote your time to now."

"They're mostly minor problems; I can hand them over to my associates with nary a tear."

"What?"

She twirled the almost full glass of wine, then spoke. "I'm leaving Halfway, signing on for the Titan trip. There's a slight chance of finding life there, and plenty of interesting organics in any event. I'll get a chance to brush up on my primitive biochemistry. I'm just not cut out for easy research or cozy domesticity." She put her glass down and began lacing her shoes. Jack seemed disconcerted, the All-American boy at a loss for words.

At last he said, "You can't keep running forever, Allie." Surely he knew that sounded sappy. She couldn't resist the obvious reply.

"I can try," she said. She stood up.

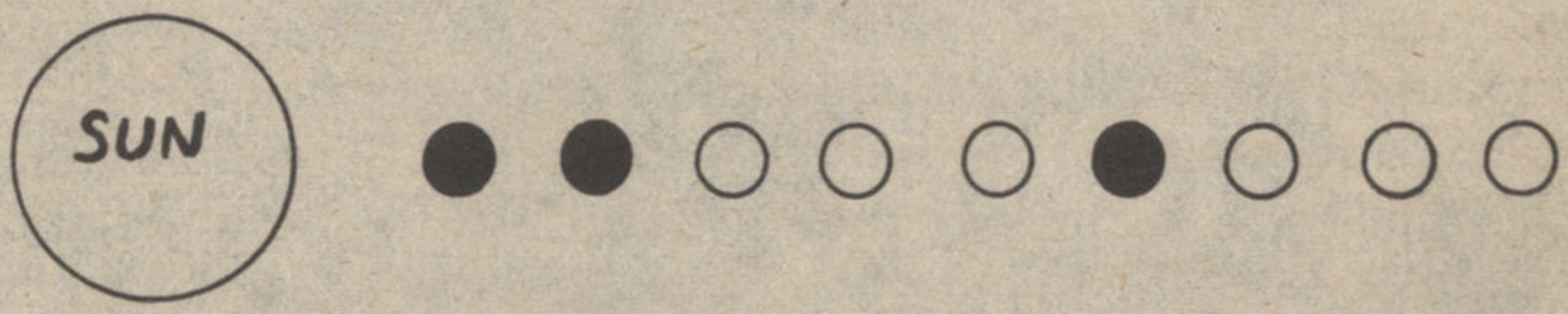
He followed her into the hall. "I'll return the robe tomorrow;

thanks for the wine," she said. Jack stood in the doorway and watched as she ran downhill to decks where he couldn't follow.

Gravity more than tripled before she got to her room, but she barely noticed. She felt lighter. An old burden had been removed.

SECOND SOLUTION TO TANYA HITS AND MISSES

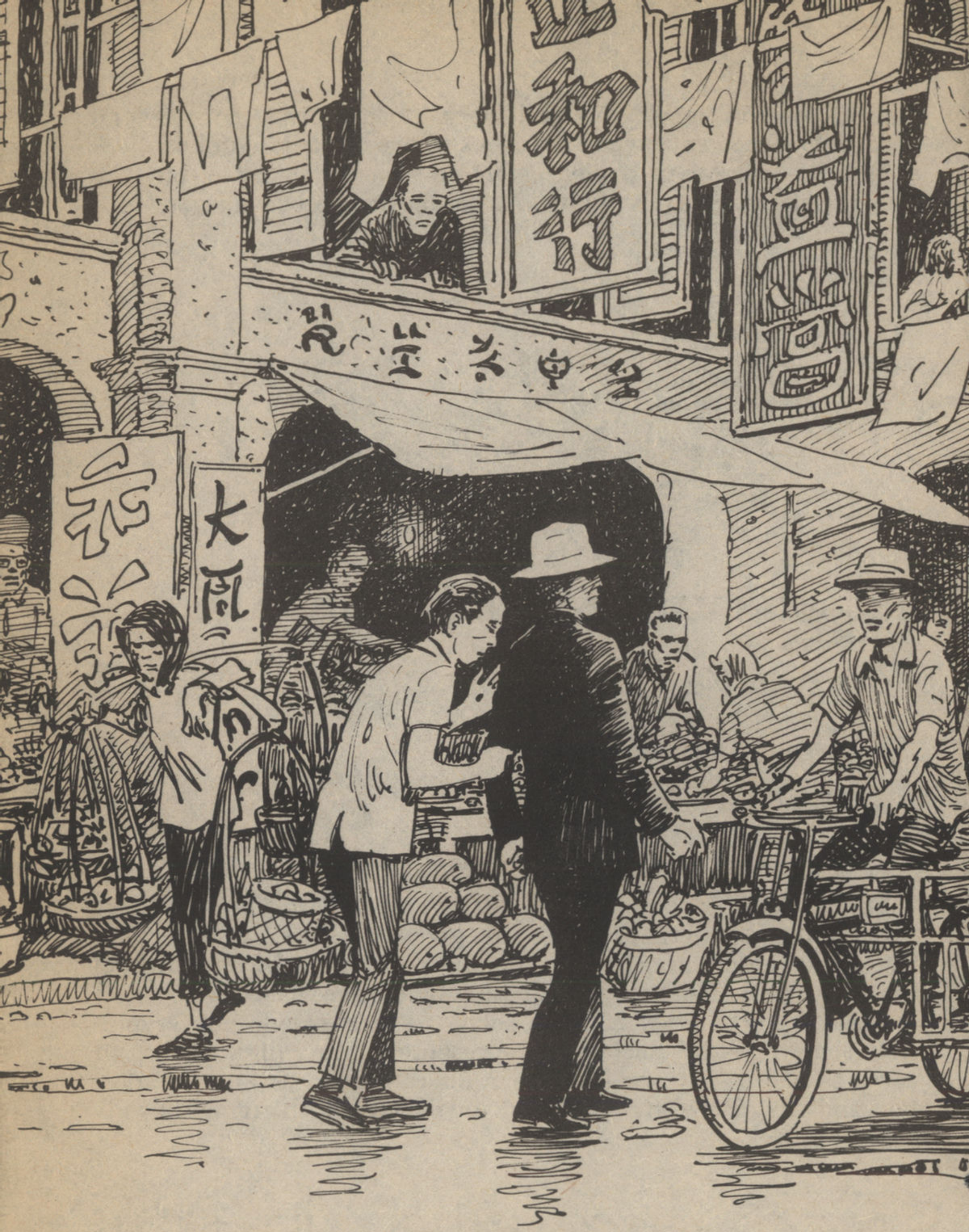
(from page 69)



There are nine planets, three barren, three with life, and three about which no information has been given (see Figure 2). As before, the shaded circles are the barren planets. (I am indebted to Michael Steuben for the ideas on which both problems are based.)

Speaking of planets, can you solve the elegant addition cryptarithm shown below? Each letter represents a unique digit, each digit corresponds to only one letter, and (as customary in such puzzles) no number starts with zero. I delay until next month giving the only solution.

```
          M   A   R   S
      V   E   N   U   S
    S A   T   U   R   N
    U R   A   N   U   S
-------------------------
N   E   P   T   U   N   E
```



THE INVISIBLE FOE

by Gary Kilworth

art: Frank Borth

Mr. Kilworth was born in 1941 in York (the old one), England. He spent much of his life travelling and living abroad, including several years in the Middle East and the Far East. Now, he's settled with his family on the edge of the Essex marshes. The most recent of his four SF novels is Gemini God.

Shadow and sunlight are the same—
and one to me are shame and fame
—"Brahma" by Ralph Waldo Emerson

Singapore, my adopted city, moved slowly into the path of the day's first rays of sunshine. It was monsoon season, and the humidity was high: a day of wet sunlight.

Street cleaners were about, pushing their boxwood handcarts towards littered destinations to brush away the debris of a night-time explosion of people. Walking along Boogey Street, I waved to several transsexuals and transvestites still occupying roadside tables. The *Kai Tai:* female hormones gave many of them a complexion and surface beauty even more beguiling than women. It was not uncommon for merchant seamen looking for whores to make a mistake. Such a beautiful people anyway—a blending of several Eastern cultures. I had an affinity with the *Kai Tai* because we held similar secrets: we seemed what we were not. We both hid beneath layers of untruth: the *Kai Tai* under the guise of women, and myself . . . my pretence was that of being human.

One of them nodded as I passed.

"Morning Thin Chai," he said.

"Morning Lucy," I smiled. I kept my voice soft. The night people were not rowdy or coarse. It was the long-noses that created all the noise. They drank heavily, shouted through mouthfuls of prawns, were sick where they stood and shattered the street air with their shrieks and raucous laughter. Jansen was a *Wai Lo:* an Occidental. Perhaps that was why my mouth tasted of snake bile? I was on my way to meet him, in a subordinate role. That a *Wai Lo,* a *ghost person,* should consider himself my superior filled me with shame.

Japanese motorbikes growled somewhere beyond a row of shops. A proprietor dozing on his raffia bed, on the porch of his premises, stirred and scratched himself through his dirty vest.

The city was beginning to wake.

(I had been there the previous evening, a girl with oranges on her

breath at my side. We had sat away from the hanging lanterns, in the shadows, and watched the swift process of change—the metamorphosis of money into gutter filth. I felt no revulsion, merely a detached interest in folly. I was a student of the art, if it is such, and not a science as Jansen would have it. Whatever the category, the study of weakness can only reward infiltrators like myself. It is useful to turn a vice inwards, on its creator, like a dagger.

When the evening's subjects had staggered away along the drunkard's walk, Nancy Ho followed me to my room. In the bareness of my small apartment she nestled against my narrow body.

There were cracks on the wall into which the house lizards wriggled. Her body was silken to the touch. Insects rustled through folds in paper curtains. Dry, shadow-thin sighs escaped my lips. On the card-thin weatherboard, a cockroach scratched its path across the shoulder of the house. Afterwards, I had to open the shutters to let the hot room breathe its odours out into the night, then stroked her hair till we fell asleep.)

By the time I reached the dockside the streets were flowing with vehicles and people. I was pleased with myself for I had not once looked towards Li Hoe Hill and my ugly creation, which adorned its brow like the despised crown of a despot. Though its white columns were printed indelibly upon the cornea of my mind's eye, I could lie to myself, so long as I did not confirm its existence. Perhaps the night rain had washed it away? Perhaps a giant dragon had swallowed it in the rays of the previous evening's dying sun? Perhaps it had vanished, the victim of magic conjured up by the geomancer who hated its presence more than he feared death?

He was standing by a capstan, overdressed in a dark European suit. It could only be Jansen, correctness extending into stupidity. The white Panama hat was his only obvious concession to the heat, but it looked incongruous on his narrow head and he snatched it off the moment he saw me. Was it possible he could read my thoughts? More probably it was the expression on my face. My feelings refuse to remain submerged and surface quickly.

"Chai?" he said, his tone unsure. "You've lost weight."

"A little," I replied.

He extended a hand. I shook it and he passed me his hat with his other hand, as if it were the most natural thing in the world that I should accept an inferior role. I was his lackey: a carrier of hats. No doubt he would soon pass me his jacket.

"No suitcases?" I queried.

He shook his head. "Not necessary. I'm flying to London tonight.

I've asked the people on the boat to send my luggage directly to the airport."

Jansen had come from Australia by ship. No doubt the people on the boat had served him royally, and I was expected to carry on the tradition.

He rubbed the fingertips of his left hand against his palm and frowned. It was a peculiar gesture, but I made an attempt at an interpretation.

"Yes, the air has a texture to it here. It's the humidity. You'll be wet through if you continue to keep that coat on."

"No, no," he said, a faintly irritated tone to his voice. "It's that heavy smell. It's almost tangible. I swear it's entering my pores."

Normally unaware of what was always part of my life, I tried to tune in to the odours around me. Fish? Cooked rice? Squid? There was nothing unsavoury that I could recognise. Shrugging my shoulders, I led the way from the docks into the streets. There was noise now, but it was of business.

Jansen stood with an appalled look on his face as powerful waves of humanity flowed past him in the street. The scene had an atmosphere of quiet panic, as if a series of crises were about to occur in specific locations and people were moving swiftly from one safe area to another.

"I thought you said you had it all wrapped up?" His voice was angry. "Did you bring me all the way to see this? You said . . ."

I interrupted him. "I told you the truth. Wait. I'll show you." I thrust his hat back into his hands and he seemed surprised. "Put that on. You'll need it. And please—take off the jacket and tie. You draw attention to yourself."

"Are we *walking?*" he said incredulously, as I strolled ahead.

"It's quicker," I called over my shoulder. "We're going through the backstreets. Even the trishaws find it too narrow."

When he caught me up I saw that he was in his shirt-sleeves, his coat over his arm. I smiled to myself. Was it possible that we came from the same loins? This arrogant, pompous fool and myself? How long ago lay the fork in time when we took our different paths, he to Europe and I to the Far East? By our differences it must have been a millennium—and yet I knew it was only ten years. Ten short years. Before that we were as alike in spirit as identical twins, my anarchist brother and I.

Before I was allowed to adopt human form my tutors in cultural sabotage insisted that I absorb much of Chinese history. Authenticity of character, I was told, was essential if we were to oust these

upstarts, these usurpers of our ancient Earth. My studies included old stories; half truth, half lie, such as I was to become, indivisible, fused into a single entity.

There is a Chinese legend which I found I could compare with our fall from grace.

In the days of the early knights, two famous warriors met to do single combat. Instead of crossing blades they stood apart, their faces like stone, and studied each other for physical flaws, for weaknesses in spirit.

Psychological combat.

For three days they stood in tense concentration. On the morning of the fourth, one of the knights had gone. Only his sword remained in the ground, a symbol of his shame. The battle had been won and lost without the need for blows. Each knew of the other, had studied his history—his skills, moods, weaponry, strength, stamina, tactics—all those intricate and intimate ingredients which go to make the warrior. Like chess players, they each assessed the other's potential, gauged reactions to every possible move and countermove. "If I should do this, he will counter thus," or thus, or thus . . . and so each physical action, each emotional reaction is considered until the final realization of who has lost and who has won.

So it was between the humans and ourselves over possession of the Earth. We lost that mental combat, at the beginning of time, and later had to disappear into remote retreats in woodlands, mountains, and wastelands. Now we are few, but emerging once again. Seeking our revenge. Our ancestors had come, peacefully, from a distant, dying world, beyond the curve of Orion's belt, at a time when our science was accepted as magic. We were called witches and wizards but though we have the ability to change our physical appearance it *is* a *science*, not an art.

We took a short cut through a park full of businessmen in their shirtsleeves. In slow motion they practised the martial art of *Tai Chi Chuen* on invisible opponents. The exercise was mentally and physically rewarding without producing fatigue. Jansen watched their movements with an enraged look on his face. Then he muttered, "Bloody fairies," and scowled at the nearest of them, as if they posed a threat to his future plans for Singapore.

Someone spoke in Cantonese as I passed, looking quizzically at Jansen as she did so. I murmured back.

"Who's that?" asked my brother. Wary lines had appeared upon his sallow features.

"A friend's sister. Don't be concerned."

"What did she say?" He was hurrying alongside me, trying to weave as I did through the crowds, but not having a great deal of success.

"She said: 'Hello, Thin Chai'," I replied patiently. "What's wrong? Are you expecting someone to spring out and accuse us of being anarchists?"

"I thought," he said suspiciously, "your surname was Chai. Why would a friend call you by your surname?"

"Because she's Chinese—we always use family names."

"Why?"

"Why not? It's the custom. If it's a big family, like Wong or Lee, we add a little description, like Fat Wong or Tall Wong. It becomes part of the name. Within the family we call each other First Brother or Second Sister—depending upon age."

"Don't they have Christian names?"

"Some of us do—if we're Christian. Some of us just have second or third names." I wanted to confuse him. Since living in Singapore I had developed a simple, effective weapon which I normally used against that ugly invader, the *Wai Lo* long-nose. I told the plain truth, without adding any explanation. "Like Lucy *Lee* Man Lo. He's a close friend, but I call him Lucy because he's a Christian."

"Lucy?" His sweating face wore a puzzled expression, but he did not question further. He took off his hat and fanned himself as he walked. "Why do you keep saying *we* and *us*?" he complained. "You talk as if you were one of them. I hope there's something to show me."

There was an undisguised threat in his voice, and I nodded knowingly.

"Yes, First Brother," I replied, sweetly. "Of course there is."

We found our way into the back streets of the tenement buildings. Bamboo poles covered in laundry protruded from each window sill up to the sky. Every day is a white flag day in Singapore. There was rubbish flowing sluggishly down the gutters which would disappear with the four o'clock monsoon downpour. The streets were greasy, and Jansen continually slipped in his leather-soled sandals. A woman passed in a Choeng Sam with a slit to the thigh.

"Don't stare," I warned him as his eyes strayed. "Chinese don't like it and they have quick tempers."

I received an answering grunt, but nothing more.

"The *noise*," he grumbled, a little while later. I had to admit the level was rather high, even for this section of the town. Carpenters,

panel beaters, ironsmiths, and a dozen other trades waged battles of sound with infants and babies. Nobody shuts their windows in the backstreets. Who wants to stifle?

"There's one," I pointed to an empty tenement flat. "Another two further on."

He took hold of my arm to stop me walking on and produced a handkerchief to wipe his face and neck.

"One?" he said. "One? What the hell is this? I thought you had things in hand. A handful of empty flats isn't what I expected."

I said mildly, "You do realise that we had a tremendous over-crowding problem? Hundreds were sleeping in the streets."

"So?"

"So most of the homeless have left—not only that, several of those who *did* have homes have gone. In the residential areas the vacancy count is much higher, but I thought this would impress you more. These people can't afford to leave—but they *are* leaving."

"Hmm. Well, I still have to be convinced. This operation has to be finely tuned. It has to get its timing right to fall in step with the rest of the scheme. Otherwise . . ."

"Let's face it, Jansen," I replied, "Singapore is one of the least important areas. It hardly matters at all. . . ."

"Every area matters," he interrupted. "Get things into perspective. We want to hit every part of them—if Singapore is the little finger of that ugly sprawling body called humanity, then crush it."

I acknowledged his concern, but assured him that everything was under control. After living ten years among these people I knew their attitudes and beliefs like my own. I was sure of my timing. Of course there was an element of guesswork, but I felt that clever statistical planning had narrowed a wide chance to a near certainty. As every gambler knows, there is six times the chance of 7 appearing from a roll of the dice than there is of 2 coming up. I always planned for the appearance of a 7.

"Where will they go?" he asked. "These people?"

"Some of them will move to the countryside—which can't possibly support them. The others to already overcrowded areas, like Changi. There, living will become difficult. Of course we won't clear the city completely—but to all intents and purposes it will be depopulated. They rely on this great, noisy animal to keep their economy at the level it is—which isn't terribly high. If people leave the city in great numbers it will weaken the island as a whole."

"Good, good. That's all I ask for." He gave my arm a fraternal squeeze. "I just want to be sure it'll work, that's all. I think I trust

you, Chai. . . ."

He made an attempt at humour, which was for him a great effort. ". . . you're my, let's see, my seven-hundredth brother. Give or take a few. We're quite close really, when you put a number to it."

"I think it's more than that," I said, "but I'm flattered by your show of affection. Shall we go now? To see the casino?"

He stuffed the handkerchief into his pocket and tipped the ridiculous-looking Panama onto the back of his head.

"Ah yes, the casino," he said. "I'm looking forward to that. Is that it? Up there on the hill?"

The Chinese in me flooded my soul with shame. I stared past his shoulder into a doorway where some children played. One of them looked up at me and smiled.

"Yes," I said. "On the hill."

Smile at the traitor, child, for he is not really a traitor—not one of your own kind—but a creature of another race. ***I do not trespass on this Earth.*** *This is my world as much as it is yours. Smile, child, smile at the saboteur. Yes, yes, traitor too then, for if I feel such, then I am.*

"What's the matter with you? Are you ill?" Jansen asked.

"No, not ill. Weary."

"Are we going or not?"

"By the way," I said, walking away. "This is your year in the Chinese calendar."

His clownish features broke into a grin. He caught up with me.

"Really? You mean my lucky year—astrologically? You don't believe in that rubbish, do you? You've been here too long, Chai."

"No, not really. I just thought it would interest you."

It was the year of the monkey. It was not to do with stars but with caricatures.

We took a taxi to Li Hoe Hill. The driver used the horn as if it had some magical arrangement with the laws of nature which would lift up the vehicle and float over the crowded streets.

"What's the name of this device you are using? I know you informed me in your last report, but I've forgotten. I have so much to remember."

"*Fung Shui.* Not so much a device—more a set of beliefs. The art of adapting the residence of the living—and the dead—so as to cooperate and harmonize with the local currents of cosmic breath."

He nodded, settling back in the Mercedes.

"If I've got it right, when a man wishes to build a house he calls

in an expert in *Fung Shui*?"

"A geomancer. The builder or designers will be told by him which way to face the structure to ensure the best fortune for the occupants. *Fung Shui* extends to many other aspects of life and death . . . even one's grave."

"I see." It was not a commitment to the idea. Merely an acknowledgment that the concept was worth considering. Jansen reserved his judgment, as would most Western Europeans, on Oriental 'magic.' I, in my Chinese rôle, was of course very sympathetic to the belief, without allowing myself total commitment.

"It's not merely hocus-pocus, you know. It has a certain factual basis—the best position for sunlight—in sight of water. *Fung Shui* means literally 'wind and water' in Cantonese . . . also the geomancer uses a compass to determine the Earth's magnetic field." Geomantic compasses were instruments set in old baked clay discs and enscribed with concentric circles, I added, after a pause.

"So?"

"So who's to say that if one lives in the flow of the field it's not beneficial? Physically, spiritually, and mentally. They may consider the field to be represented by some mythical, invisible dragon, but that doesn't cancel any probable real benefits."

"True, but I wouldn't use the word *probable*. It would take a lot to convince me of any underlying fact in the belief. However," he conceded, "I am willing to admit that the mind is a very powerful instrument, able to produce effect without cause—especially in the individual. But I'm not as certain as you are that this belief in *Fung Shui* is so deep-rooted, in a general, racial sense. Perhaps some of them just prefer to play safe, and when it comes to a choice between staying in the city where they have a certain security or moving elsewhere and raising the risk of survival—well, that may be a different matter."

"Look, let me try to explain. We're not dealing with logic—at least, not with European logic. *Fung Shui* deals with the relationships of objects to one another, as well as nature. A new building will disturb the already-established *Fung Shui* of its environment. The garden shaped like a sword will pierce the heart of a neighbouring house. Bad luck is almost always attributed to a discordant *Fung Shui*—even if the causes are not obvious. . . ."

"So a geomancer's some kind of priest?"

He had surprised me. There *was* a subtle mechanism at work beneath his skull after all.

"That's a keen observation," I replied. "Not strictly accurate . . . but

near enough."

I sensed he was waiting for me to try to convince him. Then he could attack my insubstantial arguments and prove to me how foolish I was. I let the logician simmer in his own concrete thoughts as we climbed up the back of the dragon, past the bars outside which sat perennial Mah-Jongg players.

Sparrows. The four winds. Dragons. Beauty was everywhere in our land; even gambling was dressed in graceful words. My friends, the various races of Singapore, would appreciate my skill, if not my motives, in bringing bad fortune to the land. I was the unhuman anarchist in human form. The unseen enemy. The subtle fifth-columnist. I was here to erode their society, to destroy them from within. We are few and they are many . . . but still I find it distasteful. I know what prompted my superiors to place me in a minor rôle. I was too willing a pupil, too eager to learn human ways. Not know thy enemy but *become* thy enemy. Jansen has remained unchanged. I am . . . impressionable. Pressed into my soul is the seal of Thin Chai. Where does Thin Chai end? Where do the old ways begin?

"Is that it?" said Jansen, as we rounded the last curve.

I tapped the taxi driver on the shoulder. "Stop here," I ordered. Jansen and I got out and walked a few yards to the shade of a palm.

"You spoke to him in English. Why?" asked my brother, when we were out of earshot. "He was Chinese, like you."

"You really are the most—"

"I have to be careful. Please answer the question."

I was irritated. We were both on trust, Jansen as much as I was.

"He doesn't speak my dialect," I replied. "He's from the Malay Peninsula—they use Hok Yen there. I was only taught Cantonese . . . what would you have me do? Speak all the languages of Earth? That wouldn't attract attention at all, would it?"

"Cut the sarcasm. Okay, let's forget it. I'm . . . sorry. Now, this is the casino?"

"Yes." I was still not completely mollified and kept the edge to my voice.

"It looks rather splendid to me," said Jansen, obviously trying to view the monstrosity through my eyes.

"The facade is mock Grecian," I replied.

"Yes?"

"This is the Orient. It's as out of place as an . . . it's *alien*, if you'll forgive the expression."

"Of course it is, but aren't they all?" he said with humour.

"It's also a patchwork of classic styles. Those columns are a mixture of Corinthian, Doric, and Ionic. It's tastless; and to use one of your own terms, it's kitsch. Finally, it's as big and white as an albino whale, and on this hill can be seen from every corner of the city. The sun catches this ugly beast and blinds the eyes of all those who are forced to look up at its offensive marble pillars."

"But that's not all, is it? There is also . . . *Fung Shui*?"

"Ah, yes," I said, sadly, almost hiding my face in my hands with shame. *"Fung Shui."*

"You had the geomancer divine . . . if that's the right expression, divine the correct position and direction for our Grecian casino and then deliberately . . ."

"I had it built so that it faced the wrong way. The position is all wrong. It's the manifestation of bad luck . . . unavoidable because it dominates the whole city." It was a symbol of dissonance and it permeated the lives of all those who lived and worked within the sight of this alien folly.

"At night it's so well lit with spotlights you can see it from the ships in the harbour."

"I wish I'd known," Jansen said. "I'd have gone on deck specially to look. Why the high fence and the men with pickaxe handles? Having trouble with some of your punters trying to get their money back?"

I shook my head.

"Arson. Someone has tried to burn it down twice but it's nothing to do with the gambling . . ."

"Bad *Fung Shui*? Some people from the city below? That's a good sign, Chai. It means they must hate it badly enough to risk jail."

"I know."

I looked back at the taxi. The driver had averted his face, was looking out over the sweltering city, towards the sea. Was it a subconscious act? My designs had been to manipulate the sixth sense: a subliminal erosion of confidence and the implantation of unease. He would see any hill, however small, as a dragon, and buildings erected on sensitive parts of the beast as abhorrent to the natural order of forms. The casino was built on the dragon's tail, thus bringing disharmony to his world. When we rose against them they would be weakened, both mentally and spiritually.

Jansen said, "And they're leaving because of this?"

"Beginning to. Most of them probably won't admit to why they are going . . . but they'll follow a strong instinct. When things begin to sour you look for an excuse, somewhere to lay the blame. Gradually

they'll drift away, those who feel its influence most strongly. And others will follow. Even those who scoff at *Fung Shui,* or do not have the same beliefs will eventually leave. Who wants to live in a dying city?"

"Well, I hope it works. We have our job to do . . . our preparations. I expect it cost the Earth . . . does anyone suspect you?"

"Don't concern yourself on my part—I employed foreign contractors through a European agent. I wouldn't want my friends to think I was responsible for *this.*"

Many bribes had changed hands too, but I was safe. My contact with officials and authorities was buffered by several people no longer on the island.

"I wasn't concerned for you. Just for our presence."

Our presence. We had to weaken the system without arousing suspicion. Subtle, devious ways. The neuroses of the West were easy to handle; and Jansen, as the co-ordinator, was having great successes there. In the East, where there were few strong economies, less stable governments, a smaller task faced us. In Singapore, I alone was responsible. Once we felt the humans were weak enough, over the whole Earth, then the uprising would take place. We would gather in pre-appointed places and cut through the rotten flanks of humanity like red-hot scythes. Then we would turn on them, left and right, and slaughter them as they had done us.

That was the plan, but of course to succeed it needed organisation. We were normally so poor at co-ordination and unity. Jansen—or Ertois as he had been born—had the gift of organisation. We relied on him to pull it all together, produce a feasible plan which would ensure victory despite the disparity in numerical strengths. Our weapons, the earth movements, quakes, eruptions, were as destructive as their missiles. But we needed Jansen's genius to make it all work. Being egocentric, he carried the plan in his head, so none of the glory could be taken from him. He was our General—or, as he preferred to be called, The Co-ordinator. Ten years ago he had disclosed the gist of his plans and we began to put them into effect. *Demoralise the enemy, then strike.*

As we stood and stared at the building I caught sight of a little man, standing by the corner of the fence. He was watching us intently. I knew him. We shared a common name. Chai. The Chais proliferate—there were many so called. One can get lost in a name, I thought.

"I want this to work," said Jansen, close to my ear. "I don't want anything to go wrong. Not at this stage."

"Of course not," I said without conviction. "That would be disastrous. We anarchists have a holy duty to perform—God knows."

I almost disclosed my closest secret then. He was my brother, after all, in a different life.

He said, "You know our task, Chai. You know what we must do to undermine their society. In the West I have child psychologists and economists using their expertise to guide humanity down paths leading to self-destruction . . . here, you must turn their culture inside-out to bring them to ruin." He tried to justify our position. "We didn't come to Earth from Mocte seeking this war. It's been thrust upon us by centuries of persecution."

"What persecution?"

He glared at me. "We have to live with these ugly bodies, don't we? We have to conform to their ways, their thinking, their damned . . . look, look, I don't like being repressed, Chai. Let *them* go into hiding for a few hundred years. Let us have a taste of the power."

"You talk about our forefathers, but who are *we*, Jansen? What are we—to ourselves, our human selves?"

He laughed. "To the humans? We are all the ghosts of lonely roads, all the tales of supernatural woodland, moor, and cave. The footprints in the mountain snows. The small religions of remote tribes. We are the stories that end, "Who's there?" and never give an answer. The listeners. The watchers."

"But are we?" I insisted. "I've forgotten what I am."

"We might be—perhaps once in a thousand times it is us—the invisible foe. You know," he was obviously in a reflective mood, "sometimes I wonder. Sometimes I ask myself: do we need to do this to them? If we showed ourselves, in our natural forms, wouldn't they accept us? Perhaps even like us?"

My heart was racing within my chest.

"And what do you answer?"

He fixed his eyes on me, and his reply destroyed any hopes that he had raised by his previous words.

"I remember how much I hate them."

Just after four o'clock the rains came: a flood of warm water which brought out the waxpaper umbrellas and, afterwards, the bullfrogs. Much later I took Jansen to Boogey Street, just as it was beginning to unfold. He was fond of red-light districts and talked enthusiastically about the Gut in Malta, the Reeperbahn, Soho, and many others of which I had never heard.

We reached a hand-painted sign which read 'Drinks at Logical

Prices'—a direct translation from the Chinese.

"What's that noise?" he asked, as we entered the Jungle Club, the small bar where I occasionally met my friends.

"What noise?"

"That . . . clicking."

I listened. "Oh! Chit-chats. House lizards . . . overhead, they're all over the ceiling."

He looked up and shuddered.

"Frogs. Lizards. Bats. This place . . ." He shook himself again. "I've sweated buckets and the whole place stinks of overcooked food and heavy perfume. How can you live here?"

"I have to . . . remember?"

"Hmmm . . ."

A deep, husky voice said, "Hello . . . who this fine man you brought, Thin Chai?"

We turned together. Lucy was sitting at a small table in the corner in a dress which revealed a great deal of silicone cleavage. He smiled at us and blew a ring of smoke through painted lips.

I introduced them and went away to buy the drinks. By the time I returned Jansen had his hand on Lucy's knee. It was almost . . . domestic. Although we had only adopted human form, with that form went a whole range of emotions and desires. We were as weak, or as strong, as any of our potential enemies. Our affection for individuals ran as deep as theirs: our affiliations and loyalties too. Wherein lay the question of betrayal? And to whom? Was I Thin Chai? Or was I someone else, of whom I had only dim memories? Memories which rebelled at being forced past a point some ten years in the past? Would it make any difference if I ordered the destruction of the casino—tonight, or perhaps tomorrow? I knew it would not make the slightest difference. My local friends would still be violated and I would be removed. There remained a question: who was the betrayer and who the betrayed?

If there had been a coexistence of two souls I could not now recognise a division. My human shape was created—I was not implanted within one. I was not a parasite. I was both the betrayer and the betrayed. Jansen might easily come to terms with a callous dismissal of Asia, but how did he feel about his own part of the world? The country which he had called his home for the past ten years?

Paradox. Schizophrenia. Genuine madness. I had lived with them for a decade, these wraiths that pulled my loyalties in opposite directions. Perhaps we were insane, Jansen and I, and the world was

really safe, except from a conspiracy of lunatics playing insidious games.

"What are you staring at?" he said.

My thoughts evaporated under his scowl. There was no battle of spirits raging within Jansen. His souls were models of compatibility: both were forged from a sense of duty.

"You like Lucy?" I asked. He had obviously forgotten our conversation earlier in the day, which was a symptom of his habit of retaining only that which he considered important.

"She's a nice girl," said Jansen, reluctantly withdrawing his hand as I sat down and handed round the drinks.

"Of course she is," I smiled at Lucy. "There's more warmth in Lucy than a brigade of Europeans." Lucy wrinkled his nose at me.

"You bad man, Thin Chai. You never bring me any boyfren'. This man say he go home in one half-hour."

If he doesn't, I thought, he'll get the shock of his life. His indoctrination did not include the crossing of heterosexual boundaries.

"Here's to Singapore," said Jansen, suddenly, raising his glass. "What is it . . . the *Lion City*."

"The Lion City," I murmured. Lucy and I clicked glasses with him. The nocturnal noises of Boogey Street were as lively as ever. I sipped slowly at my drink, trying to hide my sadness in the small glass. A disease was slowly killing the city and all that I held important was dying with it . . . the very least of which was me. There was something to do.

"Excuse me," I said, "I'll call the taxi. If you could follow me outside, in about two minutes . . ."

Jansen nodded, curtly, then smiled at Lucy.

"He's a good man," he said.

I left them and went out into the street. I stood for a moment, absorbing the scene around me. Stall owners were preparing for the onslaught of long-noses, hanging squid from hooks and arranging duck's eggs in neat piles with ovolo walls. Their lanterns bobbed on the evening breeze.

The night pressed around me. In the last few minutes I had made a decision but I could not be the one. My instrument was standing at the entrance to an alley. He had been following me for many weeks now, suspicious, watching, waiting. A small man. Chai Leung, the geomancer. The agents for the casino had rejected his advice. He was a man mortally wounded by shame and I knew that he carried a slim blade next to his vengeful heart. I crossed the street and joined him in the shadows.

"He's coming," I said, "the man who employed the agents." The lie slipped easily from my lips.

The geomancer's eyes met mine. He studied me for a moment, then his stare returned to the doorway through which Jansen would emerge.

"In the spleen," I advised, softly. They . . . we are not immortal. We are as vulnerable as the form we employ.

I could not kill him. He was my brother. Of the old people, Jansen, as the co-ordinator, was the only one who knew my human face. The art of invisibility is to blend. In the backstreets we melt into one another. There are few names to share among many: Chai, Cheung, Wong, Chan. I could disappear into my adopted name forever. The main point was: I did not care. My cause had been reversed. Inside-out.

Jansen would not even seen the geomancer—as assassins Chinese have few equals. We . . . they are the invisible foe. I heard his loud laugh coming from the bar and began to walk away, to be out of sight.

As I walked away, I noticed the geomancer make a sign with his left hand. Someone at a window above me moved quickly. I had underestimated both Chai Leung and *Fung Shui*. Bad fortune is often the scapegoat for a dozen other ills. Incompetence and inefficiency are two of the prime causes for the failure of a business, but what small tradesman believes a lack of success is his own fault? The hand signals passed swiftly, silently, up and down the walkways. By the time I turned the corner of Boogey Street there were at least thirty figures waiting with the geomancer, standing in doorways and alleys. Poor Jansen, he would see them after all as they fell on him in their tens, each hoping his blade would erase the bad luck. The longer he stayed inside, the more there would be.

Tomorrow we would start the demolition.

BLEEDING TURNIPS

by Juleen Brantingham

art: Jack Gaughan

June 3, 1981

George Scissors, Editor
Ichabod's Fantasy Magazine
Philadelphia, PA 19101

Dear Mr. Scissors:

Here's ROOSTERDAY! with all the changes you suggested and the rough spots smoothed out (I hope). I can't believe it. Seven drafts! I can see now why you have a reputation as a perfectionist. When I re-read this version it hardly seemed like the same story I sent to you -- how long ago has it been? Six months? But this is much better than that first version. I guess sometimes it takes a good editor to see the possibilities of a story.

As for the biographical information you asked for, I'm afraid there's nothing very exciting to report. When IFM arrives in the mail, the first thing I do is sit down to read your amusing introductions. I can't believe you're going to write one about me! I think I'll frame it and hang it over my desk for inspiration. But making an amusing introduction out of the facts of my life may be more difficult than re-writing ROOSTERDAY! six times. I'm 38 years old and married. Sam and I have three kids and they keep me busy but I make time for writing every day because it's the only thing that saves my sanity. (Such as it is.) In my "spare" time I am pursuing a degree in physics.

Thanks so much for all your help and encouragement.

Best wishes,
Juleen Brantingham

June 9, 1981

Dear Mr. Scissors,

Yes, well, I guess I didn't give you much to work with for your introduction. Honestly, I was so relieved to finish ROOSTERDAY! that I skimmed over the bio as fast as possible. You're right, my life is more interesting than that. It seems there's something happening every minute to drag me away from my typewriter. (Not five minutes ago I had to drop what I was doing to help my neighbor chase her pet lion.) I'm just not sure there's anything about my life that would interest your readers. You know, your readers have a reputation for being a little strange and my life is so normal they'll really think I'm weird.

I grew up in a small town in Ohio and left as soon as possible. I met my husband Sam while we were both attending Ohio University. We've been married 19 years now and our children (two girls and a boy) are 18, 15, and 7 years old. I spend most of my day in the car taking the kids to track meets and band practice (my daughter plays the tuba) and Brownie meetings. This week I'm organizing a bake sale for the band parents group and I've been spending six or seven hours a day on the phone, trying to line up donations.

That's all there is to tell. No unusual hobbies or pets, no fascinating adventures to report -- I get that from my writing. Oh, and the degree in physics I said I was pursuing -- well, that was just a little joke. It belongs to my husband and I'm pursuing it because he wanted to show it to one of the kids a few weeks ago and I couldn't remember where I packed it. So far I've checked every box in the attic and basement and I'm about to tackle the ones in the back of my son's closet.

Best wishes,
Juleen Brantingham

June 18, 1981

Dear George,

By the time we get through this you're going to know more

about me than my own mother. In fact, you must promise not to do any more than hint at what I am about to tell you because my mother will read your intro when the story comes out and I don't want to upset her. Maybe I can pass off your hints as simply an editor's attempt to be mysterious.

I am a witch, a member of a coven. We meet once a week to practice our blood rituals and it was one of those ceremonies that inspired ROOSTERDAY! Yes, the whole thing with the goat and the alarm clock and the leather boots and soft ice cream -- it wasn't fiction. It really happened. Now you know and if you tell all, I could go to jail for a hundred years.

If nothing else, this ought to top the crazy man with the harmonica.

Best wishes,
Juleen

June 25, 1981

Dear George,

Of course I'm not a practicing witch. I made that up so you'd have something interesting to write about. So I can't show you any devil's marks or documents signed ~~in~~ blood. I can't be the first person who's ever made up something to satisfy this unnatural (and possibly unhealthy) curiosity of yours. How about the guy who plays the harmonica with his left ear? You don't really expect people to believe that, do you?

As to your suggestions for making my life more interesting -- George, it <u>can't</u> be that important. It's only an introduction to a short story, for Pete's sake! No, I'm not interested in buying my neighbor's pet lion. You don't pay enough to take care of the meat bills. (Anyway, it's only an ocelot. I lied to make it sound better.) Taking a class at night school was a good idea but I've checked the schedule and the only thing I could fit in would be Principles of Accounting. No way. The only thing duller than my life is accounting.

I think you may be trying too hard with this one. Surely not every intro can be fascinating and amusing. Look, just write me off with a couple lines. "Married, three kids, spends all her time writing. Blah, blah, blah." I promise you, I won't mind.

Best wishes,
Juleen

July 3, 1981

Dear George,

Thanks so much for the photos and tape recordings and the article from the medical journal about the writer who plays the harmonica with his left ear. Fascinating. I guess he's a shining example of the old saying, "If life hands you lemons, make lemonade."

This whole experience has really opened my eyes to the way the publishing industry works. I thought all I had to do was write a good story and the hard part would be over. I never used to pay much attention to those intros, except to chuckle at some of them. You really get documentation for everything you use? What an enormous job! No wonder your magazine is the best in the field when you take so much trouble over every detail.

I'm sorry there's just nothing more to tell you. I've even been discussing the problem with my family and my neighbors and they all agree I'm the dullest person they ever met. I guess you'll have to go with the lines I gave you last time. I know you do use intros like that. The one you had last month on Stella Whatshername made her sound even more boring than I am.

Best wishes,
Juleen

July 10, 1981

Dear George,

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to suggest -- I never get out to talk to other fans so I didn't know that when you use an intro like you did for Stella it's a hint to your readers the two of you -- Of course I'm not -- I mean, you're probably a very nice person and this sale means a lot to me but Sam and I have been married 19 years and I never --

I'm enclosing a copy of my marriage license and my children's birth certificates and a picture of me at the typewriter. That's about all I can come up with in the way of documentation. Maybe you could make me sound like a recluse who hides in the attic and only comes out to shake hands with her family on Christmas Day. If it will help, I'll go hide in the attic.

Best wishes,
Juleen

July 21, 1981

Mr. Scissors, sir --

What do you want? Blood? I give you fact and you tell me it's too ordinary. I make up something interesting and you tell me not to get cute. Well, all right. This sale means a lot to me. You asked for this --

This morning after my husband left for work I borrowed my neighbor's ocelot, put on half of my bikini and two (small) American flags and marched downtown carrying my daughter's tuba. I told the head teller at the bank (She was in charge of getting cookies for that bake sale I told you about and boy was she surprised to see me. I usually do my banking on Friday.) that if she didn't give me all her money I'd turn the ocelot loose and serenade her customers with the Star Spangled Banner. (I've never had a tuba lesson in my life.) I created a very satisfying stir in our small town, though the guards grabbed me before I could get a nickle. Your readers might be interested to know that Sam has promised to stand by me, at least until after I have paid my debt to society.

Documentation to follow. Will newspaper clips do? There was one very fetching picture taken of me after one of my flags came loose. Of course, they didn't use that one in the paper but I can probably get a copy if you'd like to see it.

I had heard before that writing was a stressful occupation. Why didn't anyone ever warn me that the biographical notes were the hardest part?

Regards,
Juleen Brantingham

HOW TO PRONOUNCE "VAN VOGT"

Said the fabulous A.E. van Vogt,
When they praised a new book he had wrogt,
"When it's all said and dun,
I have not had more fun,
Since my last love affair with a mogte."

—Randall Garrett, William Tuning, & A.E. van Vogt (fleet feet & snappy patter; sandwiches cleaned & repaired)

CHERRY JUBILEE

by Gene Wolfe

art: Alex Schomburg


SCHOMBURG

As Smith had feared, everyone else at the Captain's table seemed to be Russian: an intelligent-looking bureaucrat who might, except for the cut of his suit, have been an American executive; a woman with upswept reddish hair, probably his wife; a round-faced man whose carefully tailored camel jacket proclaimed the likelihood of a connection to the KGB; a dark, middle-aged woman; the Captain himself.

All around the curving walls other diners sat at other tables, their heads like those of minnows, directed toward the center of the room. Smith tried to swoop gracefully into the vacuum chair a robot steward indicated, but overshot it slightly. Grinning, the Captain slapped his shoulder. "So! You are not a cosmonaut yet."

Tiny suctions drew Smith to his seat. "I haven't had much chance to practice, I'm afraid. I've been motion-sick pretty steadily for the past two days."

"That is practice, Comrade. You speak good Russian."

"Thank you." Smith nodded and tried to smile. There were empty chairs to either side of his, so two more guests were expected. Two women, judging by the seating arrangement.

The Captain introduced the others, though for Smith they were only a blur of names. He was never good at introductions unless he concentrated, and other considerations demanded his attention now.

"May I ask why you are going to Mars?" the dark woman inquired. "So few come from America. Are you a scientist?"

While he struggled to explain, the robot whooshed in with a steam-haloed sphere of russet soup, a fragrant planetoid whose surface was streaked with cirrus clouds of sour cream.

"Isn't it marvelous," the red-haired woman exclaimed, "how it holds itself together like that! No bowl to wash afterward. But how does he move it without getting his fingers wet?"

The Captain grinned again. "Quite simple. Just as you have your little compressor, he has air jets in his fingertips. He can use them in the way you see, or to maneuver, or reverse the flow to pick up small objects."

"But if someone were to jostle him . . ."

"Our borscht would be scattered. But what would happen if someone jostled the waiter in your favorite restaurant in Moscow?"

The robot drew smaller spheres from the large one, shifting them until one hung in the air above each place. The round-faced man was already fingering a long, silvery straw, and Smith discovered

he had one of his own, laid beside a steak knife. He picked it up, feeling the gentle tug of magnetism.

"Perhaps . . ." the Captain suggested. He glanced significantly at the empty seats.

"I just wanted to see what held it down. It's magnetic stainless, I assume."

The Captain nodded absently.

The bureaucrat touched Smith's arm to get his attention. "You say you are a radical economist, Comrade. I am myself somewhat involved in economics—a financial planner at the Ministry of Science. So we are co-workers, you see. But I do not believe I have heard the term."

Smith tried desperately to recall the man's name. Petrausky? Petravich? Aloud he said, "We're concerned with the irregular distribution of wealth, Comrade . . . Comrade . . ."

"Call me Pasik. As we are shipmates and co-workers, we must be friends. My wife is Anna."

The red-haired woman smiled and nodded.

"Now by irregular, Comrade Smith, you refer to the black market?"

"Call me Smitty, Pasik. No, a black market is well described by classical economic theory. We're more concerned with theft and bribery, that sort of thing."

The bureaucrat was no longer listening. Two very beautiful blondes, one in white and one in scarlet, were floating toward the Captain's table. The men rose, Smith nearly losing his hold on his chair.

"Welcome!" the Captain boomed. "Welcome! Let me introduce those you do not already know." He rattled off the dark woman's name. "And this is Comrade Smith, a fellow countryman of yours."

Both blondes smiled. "My God, what a relief," the one in white said. "I thought Cherry and I were the only Americans on board."

The Captain finished, "Comrades, the beautiful Merry and Cherry Houdini," and Smith and the dark woman tried to say something polite.

Merry took the vacuum chair between Smith and the Captain, Cherry the one between Smith and Pasik. She smiled. "You're wondering about us, aren't you?"

Smith nodded. "It might be better, though, if we spoke Russian."

"That's right!" the round-faced man put in. "The time when our Soviet citizens learned English for technical purposes is passed."

"Isn't that wonderful," Cherry exclaimed. "Now we can speak

English when we have to keep secrets." One eyelid drooped. "Do you think we're twins, Merry and I?"

Smith looked from one to the other. "You're identical in appearance, as well as I can judge, but she's wearing more jewelry. Besides, I've seen her on TV, and I don't think I've ever heard of you. Wasn't she the one who escaped from a stasis field at MIT?"

Merry turned away from a conversation with the Captain long enough to say, "Wait until you see what I'm going to do here on the *Red Star!*"

The dark woman leaned across the table toward Smith. "You must have read the announcement? But no, you said you have been ill. She will escape space and reenter the spacecraft. Is that not right, Comrade Koroviev?"

The round-faced man nodded happily.

"Comrade Koroviev is of the Ministry of Art. He has arranged that these two lovely persons should tour the new cities of Soviet Mars. Our government is eager that the scientists and engineers laboring there should be repaid for their sacrifices in every way possible."

"I understand," Smith said. It was still likely—more than likely, he thought—that Koroviev was KGB.

"About the twins or not, I know. So I will not spoil the game by telling," the dark woman continued. She extended a hand to Cherry. "But perhaps you did not catch my name. I am Vera Oussenko."

Pasik and Anna had already plunged their metal straws into their trembling spheres of borscht. Smith did so now, finding that the soup had a slight but alarming tendency to climb the straw. Koroviev began talking to the dark woman, his Russian too faint and rapid for Smith to understand.

"Well?" Cherry whispered in English. "Have you doped us out?"

He put down his straw. "At least I've discovered why I was asked to the Captain's table."

"He is a little obvious, isn't he? But he's a dear, and you can't blame him for wanting to make Merry feel at home."

A robot vacuumed up the borscht and brought steaks pinned to their platters.

"You're a clone—am I right? I've read they've developed a rapid maturation process now, so that in a few years the clone can have the same apparent age as the original."

Cherry nodded. "And how old do you think I am?"

"You're much younger than you appear, obviously. Though I don't suppose that's a particularly gentlemanly thing for me to say."

"You can redeem yourself by guessing. Come on, take a chance."

"Well . . ." Smith glanced at the other blonde. "Did your original pay for the process herself?"

"Yes."

"I'd guess six, then. Your clone sister can't be much more than twenty-eight. I wouldn't think she could earn enough to make a down-payment on the process before she was, say, twenty-two."

The red-haired woman said in Russian, "Isn't it marvelous? Pasik and I have followed it from the beginning. She is four."

Her husband nodded vigorously. "Both Merry and Cherry have been several times in the USSR. Not only to perform, but also that our scientists—my Anna is a biochemist—could examine them both."

The clone said, "These lovely people were our guides—and my interpreters before I learned their language."

"In four years you've learned Russian very well, I would say."

"I have an adult mind, and of course while we were traveling in the Soviet Union I had many opportunities. Now I'm learning Merry's techniques by assisting her. When I'm good enough, I'll go off on my own—perhaps tour South America."

The bureaucrat said, "And you see, if Merry should be killed—the things she does are very dangerous—Cherry will remain for the entertainment of the world. But what of a great Soviet scientist? That is what my wife and I ask. Often the things such a person does are dangerous too. He is exposed to radiation, perhaps. To dangerous chemicals. We ask if such a person should not be cloned as well, and even while the original remains, the clone might follow other paths in research. As our delightful Cherry says, tour South America."

His wife swallowed a mouthful of steak and gestured with her knife. "We have our own techniques, but we are interested in your methods too. We gauge the results of both and compare."

Smith smiled, nodded, and cut himself a piece of steak. As he ate, he could not help noticing how often, and how intently, both the bureaucrat and his red-haired wife looked at the slender woman on his left, even when they were talking to each other or listening to the Captain describe the wonders of the *Red Star*.

After a time, a robot steward guided in a floating tray of desserts; another gathered up their steak platters and salad domes.

"Look at that one!" the blonde in scarlet exclaimed, pointing. "Cherries for me! What's it called? Do you know?"

"I don't know the Russian name," Smith told her. "In English it's cherries jubilee."

She picked up the dish and hesitantly inserted a spoon. "What a cheerful-sounding word! Does it mean ice cream?"

Smith shook his head. "In the ancient civilization of Israel, all tribal lands were returned to their possessors—even if they had been leased or sold—every fifty years. That fiftieth year was called the jubilee. They held a celebration, because everybody was getting his birth-right back."

"I see. . . ." She was tasting the dessert.

"You don't have to look so solemn," Smith told her. "The wealthy did away with the custom long ago. Only radical economists like me know about it now."

The blonde nodded. "I like it," she said.

Merry Houdini's escape from space was to take place the next "day" after lunch. Smith gathered with the rest of the passengers outside the main air lock. No crowd, he discovered, mills quite like a weightless crowd, in which each nudge and bump produces a visible equal and opposite reaction.

The Captain was on hand, loudly supervising a mixed work force of cosmonauts and robots. So were the bureaucratic couple and the dark Vera Oussenko. The two blonde entertainers made an entrance, skimming down the corridor at breakneck speed, red and white skirts snapping like banners. The Captain raised a cheer, which the crowd took up.

"And now!" the Captain proclaimed when he could make himself heard, "Our lovely American friend Comrade Merry Houdini, the heir of that great Harry Houdini of whom we have all read, has volunteered to demonstrate for us something of her art. It is without charge to the Soviet Union, to the *Red Star*, or to you, her fellow passengers. She acts from public spirit!"

Another cheer.

"We of the *Red Star* have volunteered to cooperate with her to make this most astounding feat possible. I will let her explain to you herself what she will do."

The blonde's voice was nearly drowned by the noise of her audience. "Please!" she called. "Please be quiet!"

Smith found the dark woman floating beside him. "It is amazing, is it not?" she said. "But perhaps you and I have a special interest?"

Someone had given the blonde entertainer a microphone. "*What I am going to do in a few minutes has never before been attempted!*" Her amplified voice had lost none of its charm in the speakers. "*I am going to escape from space! You see this steel coffin.*"

Held by cosmonauts and robots who surrounded it like the points of a star, it was a long sheet-metal tool locker, nearly as wide as a cot, with a hinged lid closed by a hasp.

"*I will climb into it. I will be locked into it. It will be put in this airlock and blown out into the interplanetary void. Isn't that correct, Captain Bogdanoff?*"

The Captain nodded and addressed the audience. "When we open the inner door to put in the coffin, the lock will of course be filled with air. When we open the outer door, that air will expand into space. Since it will be without weight, just as we are here in the *Red Star,* the coffin will be carried with the air. To provide some safety, however, I have insisted—as I still insist—that a lifeline must be used. Not to use one would be a direct contravention of regulations."

"*We have one,*" the entertainer said. Her clone sister handed her a coil of white nylon rope. She flourished it. "*Now we wish to show you that there is nothing in the coffin to assist me.*"

The two blondes took the box from the crewmen and robots, opened its lid, and held it so the audience could see there was nothing concealed inside. One of the cosmonauts probed the interior with the beam of a flashlight.

The dark Russian woman asked, "Is the beautiful Merry really going to get into that thing and be pushed into space?"

"It looks that way," Smith said.

As they spoke, the young woman in the white dress was assuming a rigid posture, her arms at her sides. Her clone sister, enthusiastically assisted by two cosmonauts, fitted her into the "coffin" and closed the flat lid.

The Captain stepped forward and snapped a padlock on the hasp. "Open the airlock!" he ordered.

One of the white robots darted toward the control panel, and the massive titanium hatch swung open to reveal the chamber through which Smith and the others had entered the *Red Star* from the Russian shuttle. Several cosmonauts pushed the "coffin" inside, followed by Smith and other daring members of the audience. The escape artist's clone sister was tying one end of the nylon rope around a handle at the end of the tool chest. A cleat had been newly welded to the wall of the lock chamber; she tied the other end of the rope to that and hung the coil over it.

"Attention, please!" the Captain called. "You will all leave now." He made shooing motions. "We will jettison the coffin, and in five minutes, if there is no sign that Comrade Houdini's trick is working,

I will have a cosmonaut in an atmosphere suit retrieve it. Already a man is standing by at one of the utility airlocks."

As they crowded back, Smith found a soft and fragrant body in a red dress pressed against his. "Hello, Cherry," he said.

She turned and smiled at him. "Five minutes is plenty of time for poor Merry to suffocate in the vacuum, but my gosh, isn't it fun! She's promised to let me try it on the way home."

Smith attempted to smile in return. "You know the trick, naturally. How she's going to get back."

From somewhere behind him, the dark Russian woman added, "Yes, you must."

"Not yet. This is a new one she's just worked out."

The inner hatch of the airlock swung shut. At a signal from the Captain, the robot crewman at the controls flicked several switches. A red warning light above the door began to blink. "Comrade Houdini is now in space," the Captain announced. "You should be able to see the coffin through the ports on this side of the spacecraft."

There was a general rush toward the viewports, during which Smith found himself separated from both women. The first port he reached, some fifty feet from the corridor that gave access to the main airlock, was too crowded already for him to see well. Kicking off from the footholds on the walls, he shot down another corridor to the starboard observation gallery.

Passengers there were already shouting and pointing. For a moment, staring into the immensity of the void, he was disoriented. Then he saw it, slowly revolving among stars that burned like unblinking beacons.

"Someone has cut the rope!" A passenger he had not yet been introduced to seized him by the shoulder. "Look!"

It was true—a section of white nylon line that appeared to be no more than six feet long trailed behind the slowly pirouetting steel box like the tail of a kite.

"She will die!" a woman moaned in Russian.

A voice at Smith's ear asked, "Is it not strange that it keeps pace with us, though we fly so fast?" It was Koroviev.

"We're coasting," Smith explained absently. "We have been ever since we attained escape velocity. That box has the same speed we do, and there's nothing out there to slow it down."

"To me it appears to be falling."

"That's only because of the way you're oriented. If you were to turn around, you'd think it was rising. Actually, it's orbiting us as it drifts away." Smith wondered if Koroviev could be as ignorant as

he sounded. "What I can't understand is why the Captain hasn't sent his man out after it."

"It is no simple affair, such a spacewalk. Perhaps something—"

The Russian was interrupted by a dozen gasps. The lid of the tool chest had opened. A blur of white appeared at the crevice. "It's her hand," Smith heard himself saying. "Oh, my God!"

An impulse, a half-formed thought, sent him racing back toward the main air lock. Metal clanged somewhere ahead.

As he grasped the grab bar and swung himself into the short corridor leading to the air lock, he saw a thing of scarlet—a thing that floated, turning slowly in the faint air currents. Around it were a few globules of bright, arterial blood, like cherries.

That evening two cosmonauts appeared to take him to the VIP lounge usually reserved for Party officials. The Captain and the dark Russian woman were already there when he arrived; the Captain looked worried, the woman impassive. The Captain motioned him to a blue vacuum chair without speaking. The woman asked, "You have given orders for Merry Houdini and the others?" The Captain nodded.

The blonde escape artist arrived half a minute later. She had changed her white gown for an equally white jumpsuit, but otherwise looked just as she had when Smith had last seen her. The bureaucrat and his biochemist wife were ushered in with the expensively clad Koroviev.

"You know what has taken place—" the Captain began.

The bureaucrat interrupted. "Wait. I do not. I—we—have heard many rumors, but if this meeting is to proceed on the assumption that my wife and I are fully informed, we wish to be told officially what has occurred."

The Captain hesitated and glanced at the dark Russian woman. She said, "Comrade Cherry Houdini has been murdered. Her body was discovered by Comrade Smith while the rest of us watched the steel chest in which Comrade Merry was imprisoned."

"Where was poor Cherry found?"

"In front of the main airlock. It would appear that when all the rest hurried away, she remained behind. Presumably her murderer returned and found her there."

The red-haired woman asked softly, "How did she die?"

"She was stabbed in the heart with a steak knife."

There was a silence. At last the Captain cleared his throat. "Perhaps I should explain that Comrade Oussenko is in actuality Lieu-

tenant Colonel Oussenko of the State Security Committee. She had felt it would make for a more relaxed atmosphere during our long flight if she remained incognito. But since this unfortunate event, she feels—and I agree—that it is better that her position be known. I think we will all agree that we are most fortunate that she was present when this most unfortunate, uh—"

The dark woman said, "That is sufficient explanation surely, Captain. Let us proceed with the investigation." She swept the other five with a glance. "Except for the victim of this atrocious crime, we are the same group that was present at the Captain's dinner last night. No doubt you have all noticed that. There are two reasons, and I will explain them both to you now—no doubt if I did not, one of you would ask it. I shall save him the trouble before we go further.

"I do not believe I need explain why Captain Bogdanoff was present at his own table, or why he is present now—he is the commander of this spacecraft. I myself was his guest last night in deference to my rank; I am here now to conduct this investigation. You were at the dinner last night because you are each in some way connected with Comrade Merry Houdini, as was, of course, her clone, the late Comrade Cherry. You are here now because it appears plausible that each of you may have killed Cherry."

There was a chorus of objections.

"I will outline to you now why I believe each of you is to be suspected. Should I be mistaken, here is your opportunity to enlighten me." Her eyes moved from face to face. "However, it may also be that one of you possesses information material to this investigation. I shall be most grateful for your assistance. I remind all of you that, as citizens—or guests—of the Soviet Union, you have an obligation to the truth and to justice. Comrade Houdini, you are fidgeting. You have something to say?"

"Yes!" The blonde rose from her chair, then let it draw her to its embrace again. "What do I call you? Lieutenant Colonel?"

"You may continue to address me as Comrade Oussenko, if it makes you more comfortable."

"Well, Comrade Oussenko, you're wrong. You said each of us had some reason for wanting to kill Cherry. I didn't. My God, she cost me over two hundred thousand, and now she's dead."

"Very well, we will begin with you, Comrade. You have a lover—yes, already, though we are only a few days away from Earth. Do you deny it?"

The blonde sat silent.

"Good. Because I have certain knowledge. I ask you now—did your

clone know of your affair? I warn you that, no matter what you say, I shall proceed on the assumption that she did; you were very close, as we all know, and you and she had adjacent cabins. Did she know?"

"Yes." It was almost inaudible. "I told her."

"Good again. My assumption is now shown to be fact. You may have feared she would reveal your activities to an American lover. Or to your American journalists—if it were public knowledge that you had a Soviet lover, it would surely damage your great popularity in your own country."

"I said I *told* her!"

"And perhaps regretted it later. Or perhaps told only when she knew already and confronted you with her knowledge. But wait." The dark Russian woman held up one hand. "I am not accusing you. I only explain your presence."

She turned toward Smith. "You, Comrade, are the only other American on the *Red Star*. It may be that your government, knowing that our Soviet scientists have been studying the clone of Merry Houdini, has decided it should be destroyed. If so, then perhaps you have been sent to do it."

Smith said, "It may be possible, but it's not true."

"Or it may be that you knew Comrade Cherry in America, and have some reason now to wish her dead. For example, you may have feared she would reveal your true identity, which may be other than the B. Smith stated in your passport. Thus, you are among us.

"Comrade Petrovsky, you saw Comrade Houdini and her clone often when they visited the Soviet Union. I do not wish to say too much, but clearly I must consider the chance that there was some personal attachment."

The bureaucrat said, "You suspect that poor Cherry was my lover, and that I feared she would reveal it to Anna. It was not so, but I understand, Comrade Lieutenant Colonel. At such times as this, such things must be considered by the police. Or perhaps she told Anna already, or perhaps taunted her with lies. We understand that as well." His red-haired wife nodded. Smith observed that they were unobtrusively holding hands.

"And now—"

"And now only I remain! Pah!" Koroviev snorted. "You think I wished Cherry dead? I would have hurled my own body before the knife. Have you no notion of the cost to take myself and these two women—with all their equipment, their luggage—to Mars? My career at the Ministry of Art has been staked on the success of this tour. Now one half is dead. More than half. Do they come to see

Comrade Houdini perform her miraculous escapes? Yes, but partly only. They come too because here are the wonderful, beautiful American and her clone. Now the clone is no more."

The red-haired biochemist asked softly, "May I speak to that, Comrade Lieutenant Colonel?"

"Of course. I have asked for assistance from all of you, and thus far nothing has been given me."

"On Mars there are many engineers, geologists, even astronomers. Very few biologists. That is why I worked so hard to be permitted to come with Pasik. I do not believe that engineers, geologists, and astronomers are greatly interested by clones. But a murder, the death of a lovely woman . . ."

Smith said, "All right, we're all suspects. I'd like to point out that the kind of sexual material you enjoy dreaming up could apply to anybody on the spacecraft."

The KGB officer shook her head. "No. Only to those who knew Comrade Cherry. Besides, there is another factor."

"I thought there was."

"I believe I have already mentioned that Comrade Cherry was stabbed with a steak knife—one of those used at dinner last night. Everyone here is perhaps aware that steak a is dish greatly favored by Americans."

Several persons nodded.

"But perhaps you are not aware that it was only at Captain Bogdanoff's table that it was served. A special courtesy, you see, extended to our American guests. For the other passengers, and the crew, there was a beef ragout."

For a moment, no one spoke; then Smith asked, "Is it possible to find out whose knife was missing? The steward might know."

The red-haired biochemist shook her head. "A robot? It is useless."

"Fortunately," the KGB officer said, "it will not be necessary to ask. I know already whose knife was employed. It was mine."

"Yours!" The Captain stared.

"Yes, mine. When I had eaten as much of the meat as I wished, I thrust my knife into the rest. A few minutes later—before our steward had returned to clear the table for dessert— I noticed it was gone. I supposed it had merely come loose and drifted away, and thought no more about it."

"But perhaps," the Captain began, "it was not that knife—"

"With the assistance of your chef I have already inventoried the knives in the galley. Only one is gone. It has been found in Comrade Cherry's heart." She paused. "You are all—all save one—trying now

to recall our seating. You need not bother. Captain Bogdanoff was on my left, Comrade Koroviev on my right. But there is no significance in those facts; our table was small, so small that I could, as I well remember, extend my hand across it to Comrade Cherry without rising from my chair. Anyone could have taken my knife. Comrade Houdini here is a magician by training, and so could perhaps have done it most easily, but no one can be ruled out."

"Thank you," the escape artist muttered.

"You are quite welcome. Now I shall give all of you a lecture on criminology. The detection of crime stands upon three legs—like a camera, do you understand? The camera that will provide us with a picture of Comrade Cherry's murderer. These legs are motive, means, and opportunity. Motive is of little use to us here; I have shown already that all may have it. Means is useless also, as we have seen. Any of you might have stolen my knife—and of course by stealing it, the guilty one has prevented us from discovering that his own was gone, which was quite clever of him. Opportunity remains."

"In other words," Smith said, "who was in front of the main air lock and might have remained behind."

"Or returned to it. Precisely so. I was there myself. I saw you, Comrade Smith. Also Comrade Petrovsky and his wife, and of course our Captain. What of you, Comrade Koroviev?"

"I was not there. I am eliminated, but then sanity would have eliminated me long before."

"It was you who managed the tour, and yet you did not attend the performance? Surely we may be forgiven for asking why."

"Because I knew what the performance would be!" The round-faced man ran his fingers through his rather shaggy hair. "I had discussed it at length with Merry, as she will tell you. I knew she would be imprisoned in the box, and the box blown out of the air lock. I knew also, as any of you would who had given the matter a moment's thought, that one cannot see through the hatch of an air lock. I waited by a viewport."

"But you could have come to the main air lock while the others watched the tool chest."

"My position was at the shoulder of Comrade Smith. He will vouch for me."

"Yes," Smith said. "He was there for some time before I went back to the main air lock and found the body. If things took place as you say, I'm afraid you'll have to rule Koroviev out, Comrade Lieutenant Colonel."

Koroviev asked, "It was you, then, who discovered her?"

Smith nodded. "I've already been questioned about that, believe me. But may I ask a question now myself, Comrade Lieutenant Colonel? Who was the last to see Cherry alive?"

"A certain female passenger and her husband. They had been at the air lock, and in their hurry to reach one of the viewports, she lost a valuable earring. They returned in the hope of finding it."

"And did they?"

"Yes, against an air-return grill. Comrade Cherry helped them look for it, but she did not leave with them when it was found."

Smith leaned forward. "Was anyone with her?"

"They noticed no one, no. You appear thoughtful, Comrade."

"They couldn't have been gone long," Smith said. "I wasn't gone very long myself—not more than five minutes, if that. I know I was just beginning to wonder where the Captain's cosmonaut was. Where was he, by the way?"

The Captain cleared his throat. "He was just entering the air lock—one of our utility locks—when we received Comrade Merry's report that she had returned to the spacecraft."

"Anyhow," Smith continued, "this couple couldn't have been gone for more than two or three minutes when the woman noticed her earring was missing, but by the time they came back for it, it had been pulled up against an air return. Was it gold?"

The KGB officer cocked her head. "Yes. Does it matter?"

"I was just thinking. A gold earring would be pretty massive for its surface area—I would think it would move rather slowly. The drops of blood I saw around the dead woman would have been much lighter, but they hadn't been pulled away yet."

"Your logic is impeccable. Cherry must have been stabbed within half a minute of the time you discovered her—unless you stabbed her yourself. I had not thought of the earring, but this afternoon I scattered a little water in the air at the spot where the body was found. It is a pity, is it not, that Comrade Merry did not arrive sooner?"

The blonde entertainer asked, "May I say something? Two somethings. No, I wasn't in the ship when Cherry was found. Anyway, I came in through one of the utility airlocks, and I called Captain Bogdanoff on the intercom as soon as I got inside. The time is recorded in the log—I asked about it—and so is the time that Cherry's body was discovered. You'll find that the interval was three minutes and forty-three seconds. I can't read Russian very well, but he translated it for me.

"Now the second thing. When I first came in here I told you Cherry had cost me over two hundred thousand, and then Comrade Oussenko here spouted all that stuff about my having a lover on the ship and Cherry knowing. And I just couldn't think. It had never even occurred to me that I'd be suspected, since I was responsible for her life to begin with. But now that I've had time to think, I realize I can put an end to all this nonsense forever by doing the same thing I did with Cherry—I mean, telling all of you about it. My Soviet lover was, and I hope still is, Captain Bogdanoff."

The Captain rose, swiftly and expertly propelled himself across the room, and kissed her.

"All right, still is, I guess. Before I'd even really met him, I could see he was attracted to me. And he—well, he's strong and handsome, and God knows brave. Anyone who earns his living crossing and recrossing space is brave enough and smart enough to do anything. So last night, and the night before that, too, he came to my cabin for a while."

The dark Russian woman coughed. "I see."

"There now. It's out. Did I act while I was telling you as if I'd kill my two-hundred-thousand-dollar clone to keep it a secret?"

"No," Smith said gallantly. "You certainly didn't. But after hearing—and seeing—all this, we're surely entitled to ask a few questions concerning the Captain himself. Captain, will you tell us where you went when you left the main air lock?"

"Certainly," the Captain rumbled. "To my bridge, to watch Merry's escape. Observation is better from there than from any of the viewports and galleries available to passengers. You will now begin to suspect me—isn't that so?"

The KGB officer lit a cigarette. "I hope not."

"Your hope is granted, Comrade Lieutenant Colonel. You will have observed that several members of my crew were with me at the air lock. Two of them accompanied me back to my bridge. I was in their company until after Cherry's body was reported."

Smith asked, "Captain, that lock you put on the tool chest—the coffin—was it yours? Where did you get it?"

"Merry gave it to me."

The bureaucrat, who had been silent since denying any amorous relationship with Cherry, sputtered, "But then she could have opened it!"

"Of course she could, Comrade Petrovsky. It was a trick, a performance! You think I wished to see her killed? It was I who insisted that a safety line be used."

The KGB officer smiled. "Comrade Petrovsky is not concerned about your honesty, Captain. Or hers. He now fears that Comrade Merry may be accused. She could have had a key to the lock, certainly. But such a key would not have released her while she was within the chest and floating in space. What good would it have been?"

"It seems to me," Smith remarked, "that we're in danger of passing over a very interesting point here. The Captain has just protested that he did not want Merry to die. But it would seem that somebody did. Somebody cut that lifeline he made her use."

"Now it comes out," the KGB officer said. "I feared it would."

The round-faced Koroviev darted a look at her. "What do you mean?"

"Only the very obvious point that Comrade Smith has just made—the point that struck me from the time I first learned of the death of Comrade Cherry: that an attempt was made to kill both."

"Then you can't possibly suspect me!" the blonde cried.

"No. But I hoped that, if it appeared I did, something would be said here that would indicate the identity of the person who attempted to kill you as well as your clone sister. Now that hope is gone, and we must proceed without it. I now ask you, Comrade Merry, for the sake of the investigation, to reveal fully how your trick this afternoon was performed. Explain it to us."

"I won't."

"Are you serious?" The woman from the KGB leaned toward her. "I warn you, Comrade, this is not a joke."

"I don't reveal my methods. Ever."

"In private, perhaps? To me only."

"No! If—if I believed it had any bearing on poor Cherry's murder, I would. It doesn't. A few minutes ago, my friend Boris Koroviev spoke of our tour being ruined. This would really ruin it—for him and for me. Cherry wouldn't have wanted that."

"All right." The KGB officer took a last puff of her cigarette and flicked it toward an air return. "Perhaps later we must resort to more drastic measures, but for now *I* will explain, instead of you. To tell the truth, though I admit that what you did was very dangerous, I do not believe it so difficult."

The bureaucrat asked, "You think you know how it was done, Comrade Lieutenant Colonel?"

"It is rather obvious, surely. Let me recapitulate what we saw; then I will discuss what must have actually occurred. We saw a large sheet-metal box, which Captain Bogdanoff was pleased to call

a 'coffin,' but which many of us—I certainly—recognized as a tool chest of the type used on board this spacecraft for large implements. It was opened for us; and one of the crew was so kind, I would suppose at a suggestion from the Captain, as to shine a light in it. Then Comrade Merry Houdini entered, the lid was shut upon her, and Captain Bogdanoff put a padlock on the hasp. We have seen already that this padlock had been supplied by her. Comrade Cherry tied one end of a coil of nylon rope to a cleat on the wall of the air lock and the other to a folding handle at the end of the tool chest. I do not recall seeing anyone except herself touch that rope. What of the rest of you? Do any of you recall another person touching it?"

No one spoke.

"The inner hatch of the air lock was then closed, and the switch thrown to open the outer hatch, thus projecting the tool chest into space, presumably still tethered by the rope to our spacecraft."

The KGB officer paused and glanced at each of them in turn. "And now I shall outline to you what the killer wishes us to believe occurred.

"After all the rest had left, Cherry for some reason remained behind. When the couple I have mentioned departed for the second time, her murderer returned. He stabbed her, closed the outer hatch—Captain, would that hatch shut despite the rope?"

The Captain nodded. "Certainly."

"I had assumed so. Then he opened the inner hatch and cut the rope. That accomplished, he closed the inner hatch again and opened the outer hatch once more, allowing the cut end of the rope to be drawn out of the air lock. You see the objections to all this?"

Smith stroked his jaw. "You said he cut the rope. With what?"

"Ah!" The KGB officer favored him with a half smile. "That is well thought of. Perhaps he had a pocketknife. Or perhaps he brought a razor blade for the purpose. But not with the knife with which he killed Cherry, since that remained in her poor breast. But we ask that he do two very unnatural things. The natural act would be for him to remove the knife and use it to sever the rope, not to produce a second blade. And the natural act would be for him to flee the scene of the murder, not to open and close the hatches, and dodge in and out of the air lock, while the corpse of his victim floated behind him. I submit to you that he did not do these things—that no one did them."

Koroviev asked, "Are you saying, Comrade Lieutenant Colonel, that Cherry cut the rope herself? Let me propose another explanation, one that seems far more probable. You have told us of a certain

couple who returned to search for an earring. You have refrained from identifying them, but I doubt if there is anyone here who has not already guessed their names, despite certain naive questions asked at the beginning of this meeting. Let me say only that the woman habitually wears her hair heaped upon her head, and that such a coiffeur almost dictates the use of earrings, though she wears none now. Is it not possible that no earring was ever lost? Could not her husband—a powerful man—have held Cherry while his wife entered the air lock and cut the rope, then returned to stab Cherry? Is it not possible that they left her dead, not alive?"

"No, it is not. Consider—first the couple of whom we speak leave; they were seen by others to do so. Then they return; that too was seen. They seize Cherry, as you say, operate the controls, cut the rope, and operate the controls again so that the tool chest will drift away. In so much time, almost every passenger would have seen the tool chest tethered, then the wandering tool chest, like a strayed cow.

"But that was not what was seen. I have spoken to more than a dozen who watched, and without exception they report that the rope had been cut before they sighted the tool chest. Furthermore, those who report the departure of this couple to seek the lost earring also report that the tool chest, with its rope severed, was in view before they left."

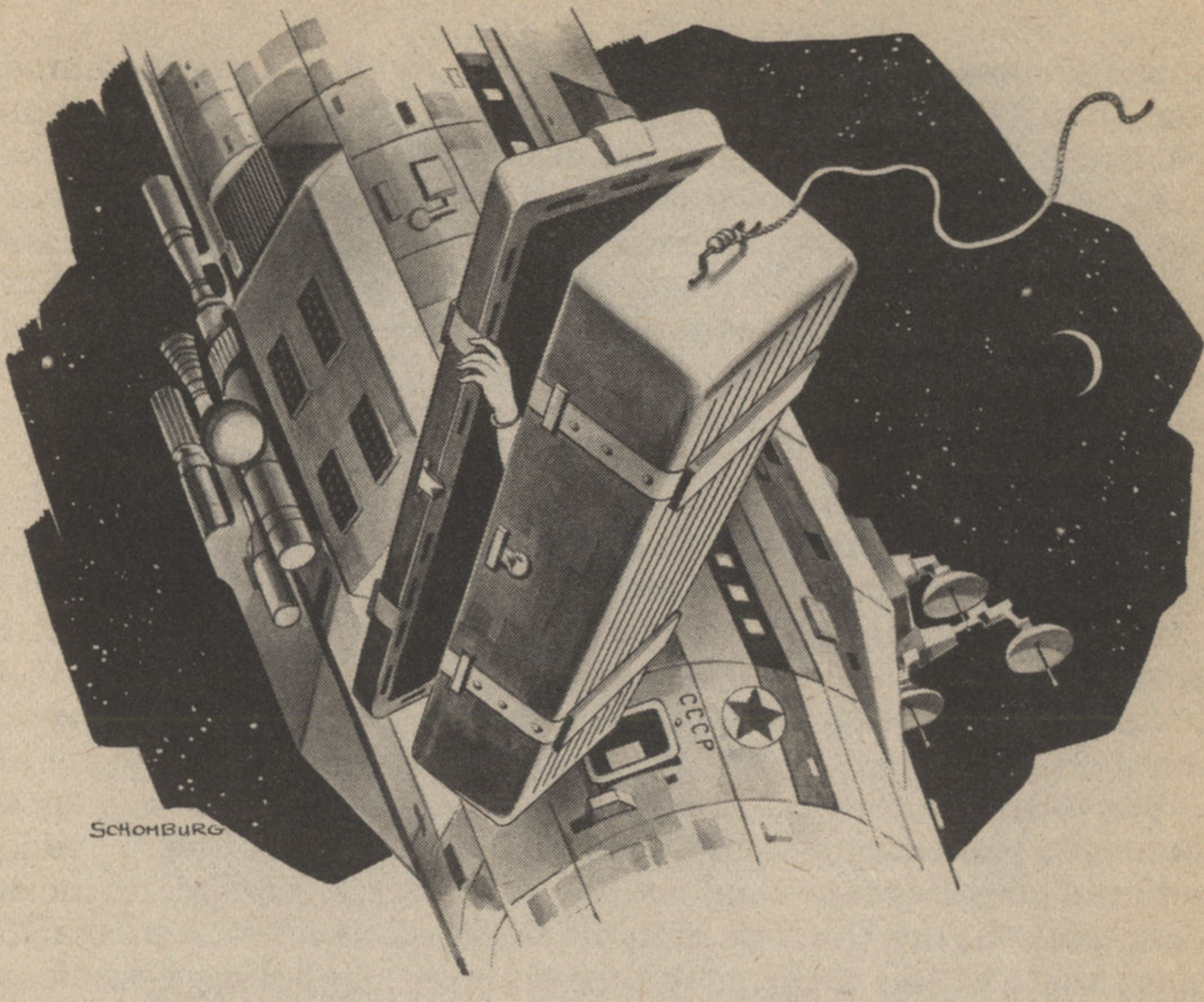
The biochemist said, "Then it *must* have been Cherry who cut the rope!"

"No, not at all." The KGB officer smiled. "I will explain that in a moment. But meanwhile, what of Comrade Merry, who is drifting in space? How is it she is here with us now? I propose to you that a face mask and a small cylinder of oxygen were concealed somewhere in her 'coffin.' Do any of you wish to argue?"

"I do," Smith said. "I saw the inside from close up—as you know, since you were beside me at the time—and there wasn't room for anything like that."

"Precisely so, Comrade. You saw the inside, and so did I. But there was a part of that chest we did not examine, and now will never examine, since it is wandering the void. I refer to the interior of the lid. When we see what appears to be a common object, such as that tool chest, we tend to assume that it has remained a common object. That is much to the advantage of the clever magicians, who have made it an uncommon one.

"With this mask and the oxygen, our friend Comrade Merry here could breathe for a time. We have already seen that the lock that



held closed the chest was no obstacle—she had supplied it herself. I would propose that in place of the catch which normally retains the shackle, she had substituted a part made of some substance that would vaporize upon exposure to the vacuum of space—there are many such substances. Comrade Merry had only to wait a few moments for the lock to spring open.

"When she was no longer locked inside, she opened the lid a few centimeters. Several persons saw her hand at this point. She opened it, I believe, to orient herself, but most of all to determine the condition of the light. Her tool chest was circling our spacecraft, as she knew it would. The chest was small, the spacecraft very large. For most of the time, the chest would be exposed to full sunlight—much brighter than sunlight is ever seen on Earth. But for a part of each circuit, the spacecraft would be between the sun and the chest, and it would be in almost perfect darkness. When that moment came, she left the chest and returned to the spacecraft. I would assume that, together with her mask and oxygen, she had a small cylinder of air for propulsion, since the compressors we use on board would not operate in a vacuum."

The biochemist exclaimed, "She'd be killed!"

"Not if she kept her head—as she obviously did—and everything went well. The human body can survive for some time in a vacuum provided it does not suffocate, and all this required no more than three or four minutes. Once she reached our spacecraft again, she had only to open one of the hatches and come in. The hatches are made so they can be opened easily from outside—a sensible precaution, since cosmonauts sometimes work there, and an emergency may occur.

"However, she would have run a considerable risk of being seen with her mask and other equipment if she had simply opened a hatch and ducked inside. How was she to know she would not be seen? Comrade Smith, you have been following all this with intelligence and imagination, I believe."

"Thank you, Comrade Lieutenant Colonel," Smith said, "but I have no idea."

"Clearly she required a confederate inside the spacecraft who would give her a signal if the way was clear. How could such a signal be given from within the spacecraft? Quite easily—if no one were about, the confederate would open the outer hatch of the air lock, so that Comrade Merry had merely to enter and close it, thus automatically filling the lock with air. Now we have come to an understanding of one of the points that at first puzzled me about this case—why the unfortunate Comrade Cherry chose to remain at the air lock when all the rest left."

The woman from the KGB gave them a humorless grin of triumph and lit another cigarette. "When I realized this, I of course examined the main air lock. I found its outer hatch was closed, although it had been opened for the trick and—so far as the crewmen I questioned knew—left open. How did it come to be closed? I believe that we know now. The murderer closed it, and no doubt saw to it that it would remain closed, because he wished to prevent any sudden effort to rescue Comrade Merry.

"But what of Merry then? She was in space without a pressure suit and with only a very limited supply of oxygen. Surely, however, she must have considered the eventuality of the main air lock being closed to her. She had a second confederate waiting to welcome her at one of the utility locks. Who was that? It is obvious, surely—Comrade Koroviev, the manager of her tour, who was, as we have noted, not at the main air lock with the others.

"I have kept you a long time, but it will not be much longer now. Let me summarize. Comrade Cherry Houdini was stabbed with my

steak knife, taken from our table last night. It could only have been taken by one of the people in this room, since no one else—not even the robot steward—approached the table at the time it disappeared. The rope that was to have secured Comrade Merry's 'coffin' was cut, yet no one was seen near the rope except Comrade Cherry, who was herself a victim. At the time of the stabbing, everyone who was at the table was accounted for. I will begin at my right, as we sat that evening, and go around the table to show you. Comrade Koroviev was at the utility air lock, waiting to admit Comrade Merry. The woman to his right, the wife of Comrade Petrovsky, was with her husband and he with her; unless both committed the crime, neither did. To Comrade Petrovsky's right was the unfortunate Comrade Cherry. To her right was Comrade Smith; he was at the gallery, beyond the viewport where the Petrovskys watched, until he left to discover the corpse; he was seen there by several passengers, including myself. To his right was Comrade Merry; she was in space, having not yet reentered the ship. To her right was the Captain, who was proceeding, in the company of two of his crew, from the main air lock to the bridge."

Smith said, "You seem to have eliminated everyone—except yourself."

The KGB officer smiled. "I have eliminated myself as well, Comrade. I know that I did not steal my own steak knife.

"Now we must ask ourselves how this murder was accomplished. I propose to you that the answer is one we have seen already—it is the answer to the question: How did Comrade Merry know she could reenter the spacecraft without being observed? The answer, as we have seen, was that she had a confederate. The murderer also had a confederate. That is the only way in which this crime could have been committed.

"So I have asked myself who among you might have such assistance. Let us go around again. Comrade Koroviev knew no one on this spacecraft except Comrade Merry and her clone. The Petrovskys knew the same two and each other, but no one else. Comrade Cherry we may dismiss. Comrade Smith knew no one, so far as I have been able to discover. Comrade Merry knew Comrade Koroviev, the Petrovskys, and Captain Bogdanoff, but no one else, and as we have seen, none of them could have committed this crime. That leaves us with Captain Bogdanoff." She paused, and smiled again.

"Captain Bogdanoff knows at least a dozen people very well—people whom we have not even considered thus far, because we do not know them. I mean the members of his crew, his subordinates."

"Comrade!" The Captain rose from his chair. "Are you accusing me?"

"I am. You will sit down, Captain. I have already radioed Moscow, and at any moment your first officer should receive orders to place you under arrest."

The bureaucrat said, "But Comrade, if he was assisted by one of his men . . ."

"I do not believe he was," the KGB officer told him. "I have questioned them, and in any event it seems unlikely. He had another, much safer, confederate. It is he who controls the programming of the robots."

For a moment no one spoke. The Captain looked stricken.

"Much earlier I spoke of the three legs supporting the camera that gives us a picture of the murderer. You will recall that they are motive, means, and opportunity. Since we are already dealing with opportunity, we shall consider them now in reverse order.

"Of the eight who sat at that table, only Captain Bogdanoff could have nullified a robot's basic directives so that it would commit the crime. He is thoroughly familiar with cybernetics, as all cosmonauts must be, and only he and the first officer know the access code required. A robot operated the air lock controls.

"Of the eight, only he could have cut the rope. It was he who provided it, and since the rope was coiled, the cut would not have shown if it was inside the coil. All that would be necessary would be to leave a few threads uncut so that the ends would not separate. So much for opportunity.

"We now consider means. Of the eight, any of us could have taken my knife, but Captain Bogdanoff was in the ideal position to do so. He sat on my immediate left, which is to say that my platter was at his right hand.

"Last, motive. Captain Bogdanoff's wife is the daughter of an important official of the party—I hope you will excuse me if I do not name him. Suppose he were to hear that his son-in-law had been intimate with an American entertainer? Comrade Merry, as we have seen, is not reluctant to speak of it. We may presume that Comrade Cherry, who was her second self, was not either. No doubt he initially believed they would be discreet, and only later realized that they would not."

Earth seemed no more than a distant star, and Mars, round and red as the sun glimpsed through fog, grew until it filled the viewports. The blonde was packing her bags when Smith rapped at the

door of her compartment.

"Can I come in?" he asked. "I'd like to talk to you."

She hesitated.

"It will only take a moment."

She opened the door more widely, and he sailed through and settled expertly into a vacuum chair. "Gravity again soon," he said. "We won't have to take those shots to keep our bones from melting anymore."

"Uh huh. Actually, I kind of enjoy floating." There was one other chair, and she had taken it.

"Me too. I suppose I was just making conversation."

"I know what you mean. It's such a relief to speak English."

"That's what I wanted to talk to you about," he said. "We'll both be pretty lonely on Mars. We'll both be traveling, too. I've got some flexibility as to where I go, and I'm sure Koroviev could juggle your dates a little. It might be possible for us to be together most of the time."

Her eyes widened slightly. "I don't think . . . No."

"Well, would it be all right if I called you? If it ever happens we're in the same place? We could have dinner together."

She shook her head.

"You were a lot more friendly that first evening at the Captain's table."

"That was Cherry."

"I see." Smith nodded.

"Did you hear about Vera Oussenko? They've got her locked up. They're not even going to let her off on Mars. Straight back to the Terrestial USSR."

He shrugged. "She said herself that the Captain's wife was the daughter of a party official. She must have known the risk."

"I still don't see how they can do it."

"She was the only one no one else would vouch for at the time of the killing. She said she was behind me, but I didn't see her. And it was her knife."

"I mean, because she was KGB. I guess even if you are, if you overstep . . ." The blonde shrugged, letting the sentence trail off.

"It's the same for us Americans, Cherry. If you go too far and the law finds out, it's all over."

"I'm Merry."

"You don't have to worry. I've got a bug detector in my pocket, and if they were ever listening in here—and I suppose they were, since the KGB woman seemed to know all about the Captain—they

aren't now. With her gone, the system's probably run out of tape and shut itself down."

"I'm Merry. You're guessing."

A slight smile tugged at the corners of Smith's mouth. "You want me to tell you how the trick actually worked?"

"No!"

"All right, then we'll begin with you and Merry. While I was sitting between you two at the Captain's dinner, I started wondering what she wanted you for. I knew why I wanted you already—but what about her? I knew you must have cost her a small fortune." He paused. "Are you going to tell me to get out?"

The blonde said nothing.

"So I thought about it a bit. And there was only one reason I could see. Sure, an identical twin clone might be a handy thing for a magician to have. But a quarter million or so? Then too, at least half the value of the clone would be lost if everyone knew about her, and thanks to the scientific notoriety, everyone seemed to know about you. What was left, as far as I could see, was life insurance. The clone could do the really hazardous stunts. It didn't seem very fair."

So swiftly he almost missed it, she glanced at him, then down at her lap again.

"And here the great Merry Houdini was going to pull a very dangerous stunt on board. I decided then that I'd keep an eye on you both to see if you'd switch roles."

"Could you tell?" It was a whisper.

Smith shook his head. "No. In fact, for a while you pretty well had me convinced you hadn't. I thought that maybe Merry figured you weren't up to it yet."

"You're right," the blonde said. "I'm Cherry. But I'll never admit that to anybody else, and I didn't kill her. How could I have?"

He grinned. "You're going to make me explain the stunt. All right, I will. It was risky, but nowhere near as risky as that loony thing the KGB woman dreamed up. Anyway, I knew that couldn't be right because I was sure there'd been no hidden compartment in the lid of the tool chest. I remembered seeing it when the two of you opened it, and it was a flat piece of steel. Even so, I didn't really understand what you'd done until a couple of days afterward.

"There was no secret compartment. But when you—pretending to be Merry—climbed into the chest, you had a few little items hidden on your person. Since you had on a dress with a full skirt, my guess is that they were taped to your thigh. One of them was a little tube

of sealant."

Her nod was almost imperceptible.

"As soon as Merry—wearing your red costume—shut the lid, you got the sealant out and went around the crack with it. Doing that in the dark would have been a pretty tough job, so I suspect you had one of those little penlights too.

"Meantime, the Captain was snapping on the lock Merry had given him, and Merry was tying one end of that coil of nylon safety line to the handle of the box and the other to the cleat that the Captain had got welded to the wall for you. The Captain said, and probably believed, that he was the one who had insisted on the precaution; but my guess is that Merry psyched him into it, which shouldn't have been too hard. If he hadn't bought the idea, she would have insisted on it, or maybe used something else, like a telephone wire.

"But what did Merry do when she had both ends tied? Let go of the coil and let it float there? No, she put it over the cleat, just as if she were hanging it on the wall down on Earth. All of us were so used to seeing that kind of thing that we didn't pay much attention.

"Then everybody backed off. The inside hatch was shut and the outside hatch opened. The rush of air ought to have blown the floating chest out, just like the Captain said it would. Only it couldn't, and it didn't. I tried the idea out later; I cut a cleat out of cardboard and made a rope by tying a pair of shoelaces together. And when you hang the coil over the cleat the way Merry did, and then pull the end, it doesn't uncoil. The first loop just tightens until it grabs the cleat. That chest never went out the air lock at all. It was moored, anchored in the lock.

"So there you were. You were inside the chest, with no air on the outside, but you were still in the *Red Star*. You had sealed the top, and there must have been enough air inside to last you for at least half an hour if you didn't start thrashing around. All Merry had to do was wait until the rest of us ran out to look for you through the viewports.

"We saw you too, or at least we thought we did. Because your Russian manager, Koroviev, was at one of the utility air locks with another tool chest. This one had been gimmicked in advance; there was a piece of rope tied to the handle, and the lid was held closed by the sort of stuff that KGB woman thought you'd used in the lock—this was a whole lot easier, of course, because all you had to do was slap some on. My guess is that heavy grease would have done it. Anyway, it held the lid down, whatever it was, until it boiled

off in space. Inside the chest was a dummy arm on a spring. As soon as the grease was gone, that pushed against the lid enough to open it a little, and all of us saw what we thought was your hand.

"In the meantime, as soon as she was sure the coast was clear, Merry closed the outer hatch, opened the inner one, and let you out. She didn't even have to pick the lock; she probably had the key stuck down the front of her dress.

"But you had something else stashed away besides the tube of gunk and your little light. You had the KGB woman's knife. Why did you pick her, anyway? Did you know she was KGB?"

Cherry shook her head. Her eyes were bright with tears, though she was not sobbing. "She was just the farthest away, and I hadn't liked the way she held my hand. It was as though I had another boss."

"Somebody else to take the cash and glory while you took the orders? And the chances. Yes, I can see that. That's what made me sure you two had switched identities—Merry had no reason to kill you, but you had a couple of swell ones for killing Merry. Do I have to go on with this?"

"No. Merry unlocked the box and let me out, and I was waiting for her. Twice before I had tried to hit her back, and I knew how fast she was. Faster than I am, I guess because she'd had more practice. I had my knife all ready. She had to pull the lid and the box apart because of the stickum, so her arms were spread out." The blonde demonstrated, one arm up and one down. "And I pushed it right into her chest. I stuck it in so hard it made the box and me fly back and bang against the outside door. I hadn't thought of that, and I was afraid somebody would hear it, but I guess all of you were making too much noise yourselves.

"Then I took the box into one of the service corridors and hid it. Merry had been supposed to help me with that, but it wasn't hard. I just pulled it along with the rope. I had to wait there myself until I was sure the other box was far enough away that nobody could see the fake hand. Then I came out."

Smith nodded. "And by then I had already found Merry. But Merry in your red dress, so I thought it was you."

"Are you going to tell them? I mean, you're not going to tell them here, I know that from what you said before. But when we get back home?"

"I don't know," Smith said. "It all depends on how things go on Mars." He glanced toward the swollen crimson sphere in the viewport.

"Aren't you afraid I'll kill you there? Murder you too? I killed her, after all. I don't even feel bad about it. Only bad because you found out."

"You've never been a child," Smith said. "Never had the time to develop a conscience. That was something Merry forgot about." He hesitated. "No, I'm not frightened. Not much. I've seen you and talked to you, and you're worth the risk."

"I think you are too," Cherry said.

"What do you mean by that?"

"You're a more dangerous person than I am. You're a spy of some sort, aren't you? Even the Russians guess that, and part of the reason you won't turn me in is that it looks better if a Russian killed Cherry than if I killed Merry. Anyway, anybody who thinks the way you do is dangerous."

Smith chuckled. "You'll have to risk it."

"I think I want to risk it. Smitty, are there children on Mars?"

"A few, I think. Not many yet. Why?"

"Because like you said I've never been one. I mean, it went by so fast. I want to see what they do. Maybe play with them."

Smith got out of the vacuum chair and allowed himself to drift toward the center of the room. "This is fun, all right," he said. "I'm really sorry I won't be able to do it much longer. Listen, Cherry, I grew up at the regular speed in the regular way, and it seems awfully short to me too now."

"You'd better call me Merry, so you get used to it. There are bank accounts and things."

"I'll bet. If she could spend a quarter million for you, there must be quite a bit more. All those TV specials. Do you know what first put me on to you—Merry?"

The blonde shook her head.

"The dessert. The way you looked when I told you about the year of jubilee, when the poor relations got their land back. Your eyes got round. You're very pretty when your eyes get round."

"You said it was radical economics, and it was. This is too, I suppose. You've just gotten yourself a girl on Mars—all through radical economics."

"You're right," Smith told her. "But I wish I could have gotten my girl the way you got your man."

AQUILA

by Somtow Sucharitkul

art: Val Lakey / Artifact

Mr. Sucharitkul advises us that, while—scientifically speaking—the term **aurochs** should properly refer only to an extinct species of European wild cattle, many English naturalists today apply the name to the European bison, still extant in the forests of Lithuania; and he has so used it in this story. Why not? What fun would alternate history be without the odd anachronism?

Once, when I was very young, Father took me in the motor-car to the Via Appia, to see a man being crucified. It was some slave, some minor offense that I don't recall; but it was the first time I had ever seen such a thing. All the way there—and the way from our estate is olive-tree country, beautiful in the height of summer—Father was lecturing me about the good old-fashioned values. It was as much for the benefit of Nikias, my tutor, as for myself.

As we approached the Via Appia we would run across peasants or slaves; I remember that their awe at seeing my father's gilded motor-car, with its steam chamber stoked by uniformed slaves, with its miniature Ionian columns supporting a canopy of Indish silk, was sometimes comical, sometimes touching. Only someone of at least the rank of tribune might possess such a vehicle, although they are much slower than horses for their secret parts are manufactured somewhere deep in the heart of the Temple of Capitoline Jove, by tongueless and footless slaves who can reveal little of the mysterious rites involved. Truly the Emperor Nero must favor my father, who had never plotted against him and always sent him curious and witty gifts, such as that funny glowing shroud from Asia Minor that had been used to wrap up the living corn-god, sacrificed each year and found reborn in some unfortunate young man.

It was stifling. My toga praetexta was drenched with sweat. When we got to the crucifixion, it was late in the day and hard to get a good view; even my father was weary of lecturing me, and did so only intermittently as Briseis, the pretty little cupbearer, filled and refilled our goblets with snow-chilled Falernian. I was young then, as I have said, and remember little of the poor wretch's agonies; he put on a good show at first, shrieking hideously as the ropes were tightened and the cross raised, but presently he sank into lethargy, his eyes (which I only saw by virtue of being perched on the motor-car's driver's seat) glazed over, and flies stormed all over him. We gorged ourselves on melons and on a concoction of peacock's brains and honey.

As we started home, my father, enervated by the sight of bloodshed, harangued me all over again, standing proudly over the prow of the motor-car with his white mane and his senator's toga trailing in the evening breeze.

"Titus, old boy," he growled gruffly, dropping pointedly into Latin instead of using the Greek of casual conversations, "remember that you're a Roman. As a citizen you'll never be crucified, of course; but even so, a lesson well learnt and all that. The old ways are the

best—I don't mean to espouse the Republic or anything foolish like that, Jove forbid, only to make sure you grow up straight and true and my son, eh, what! We should never have let those slimy Greeks come over and transform us into culture vultures . . . in the old days men were hard: fighting hard, playing hard, not like your mincing tutor over here." (Nikias and I were giggling in the back over some childish matter.)

"Listen, young man, when I talk to you! After all, the Divine Emperor Lucius Domitius (or Nero as he likes to be called) may do all this acting and singing, but he chose me, a sober and staunch man of courage and integrity, to receive the gift of this magical horseless chariot, of whose locomotive secrets only the gods Vulcan and Jove know."

"But sire," said curly-haired, beardless Nikias of the gaudy tunic and scented hair, "it is said that this device was invented by a Greek scientist, Epaminondas of Alexandria, by enlarging on the theses of the ancients Aristotle and Archimedes; that this same Greek now holds an important, but secret, position in the Temple of Jove; that this mysterious engine, over which rites must be said and sacrificial blood split before it will run, is a simple mechanical device, the basis also of the equally mysterious ships which even now have returned from Terra Nova laden with curiosities—"

"Impudent scum! You can't buy a decent slave for a thousand gold pieces," my father said. "I suppose I'll have to beat you for impertinence." He pulled a little flail from a fold in his toga. "Damn these horseless monstrosities anyway! Nothing to whip, the thing just chugs along without any *feel* to it—" At that he began to lay into my poor tutor, but it was more of a gesture than anything, and he missed more often than not.

"Tell me about Terra Nova, Nikias!" I cried. It was the first interesting thing to happen that day. "Is it true they've found barbarians?"

"Yes, and giant chickens, too, that go *gobble-gobble-gobble,* and *vast* herds of aurochs, and the fiercest barbarians imaginable—thousands in number! Why, they decimated the Tenth Legion before General Gaius Pomponius Piso—"

"Insufferable!" my father said. "Everone knows that the Roman army, in its discipline, its order, and its bravery, has not been beaten in a thousand years."

"Tell that to the Parthians," said Nikias, deftly dodging a blow.

"They must be really fierce, these Terra Novans," I said. I know I had stars in my eyes, because even then I knew I was going to be

a general and have a legion to myself. Father could afford, after all, the kind of bribery that would get me some minor foothold in the establishment, and I'd go from there. "Are they as fierce as the Britons?"

"Fiercer. Wilder," said Nikias, and then added (keeping an eye out for my father) "but I'm not going to tell you a thing about them until *after* you've memorized all the aorist and second aorist forms of these contracted verbs. See, when alpha, epsilon or omicron stems come into conjunction with the conjugatory endings—"

"Bloody Greek grammar," my father grumbled as we pulled into the estate.

"He's just jealous," Nikias whispered in my ear, "and besides the Emperor only invites him to those parties so that wily Petronius can make fun of him when they have those poetry-improvising sessions and your blessed father, who can't tell a hexameter from a hole in the ground, has to get up and warble to the lyre—I hear Petronius is writing him into his new novel, and the in-group at the palace is just in *stitches*—"

Perhaps I've painted too genial a picture of those days. But alas, they were all too short. My father lost favor with the Emperor, got accused by the Empress Poppaea of some tomfoolery, and was permitted to commit suicide. Despite the law, which is quite firm on the fact that descendants of traitors who honorably run on their swords may inherit as though the escutcheon had never been blighted, the Emperor somehow managed to confiscate the estate.

It was Nikias, that slimy Greek as Father used to call him, who saved my hide. He had a cousin, a eunuch, who was high up in the palace bureacracy, and who had become a millionaire simply by accepting one out of every three bribes that came his way, regardless of whether he followed up on the request to which the bribe was attached; and so our truncated family came to live at court.

Meanwhile I grew tall. Nero and a few other emperors expired in various unpleasant ways. Terra Nova was all the rage for a while, and several modern cities with all the amenities—baths, arenas, circuses—were built, mostly along the Eastern shore of that huge landmass, and procurators sent to govern the thriving colonies of settlers and Romanized natives. The legions pushed westward, into what is now the province of Lacotia. Some of our horses escaped and began to breed in the wild; the Terra Novans, in only a few years, became the most adept of horsemen by all accounts.

Frankly, I changed a great deal after father's death, which taught

me a salutary lesson about the human condition. I determined to become a fine Roman, to become, in fact, the very man my father had thought himself to be. I boned up on my Caesar and on all those battles; I studied Xenophon and all the Greek military historians, went off with the legion and got myself a few border commands, saw action in Britain, when the Picts came down on Eboracum, and again against some recalcitrant barbarians on the Dacian border. . . .

After a while I was noticed by the Divine Domitian; and it was on the very day that the Emperor granted Roman citizenship to all the barbarians of Terra Nova, and awarded himself the title of *Pater Maximus Candidusque,* or *White and Greatest Father,* that he also honored me with the command of the Thirty-fourth Legion.

"Titus, old chap," the Emperor said to me, "have I conquered anything lately?"

We were ensconced in the Imperial box at the Circus; Domitian was choking on a pickled lark's tongue with laughter over some lions who were making mincemeat of a bunch of recalcitrant Judaeans. His favorite, a peculiar-looking dwarf with an enormous head and staring eyes, sat at his feet.

"Well," I said, feeling very silly to be out of uniform and having long since lost interest in the sight of gore, "there's not much of the world left, your magnificence. West of Lacotia, perhaps, in Terra Nova—"

"Boring, boring, boring, you silly general. Those savages are fierce; and they certainly put on a spectacle in the arena; though I suppose you haven't seen any of the new shows, being out in the backwaters quelling Visigoths and Picts."

"True, my lord, but—"

"I want spectacle, Titus!" The crowd was roaring now as the slaves with meathooks dragged the corpses out through the gates of death. A lone lion straggled. Domitian clapped his pudgy hands; a bow and arrow was handed him on a silver platter. He waved for silence, and it fell just like that, twenty thousand people gulping in mid-sentence. "I haven't had an interesting spectacle since . . . last year, when I had Amazons in motor-cars fighting pygmies on bicyles."

"Yes, where are the motor-cars these days, my lord? I haven't seen a single one since I got back from the campaign. . . ."

"Shush, shush, old chap." He clambered up onto the seat of his throne and transfixed the lion in the neck with a single shot. The crowd burst out in carefully rehearsed spontaneous cheering. He sat down as they began to flood the arena for a mock sea-battle. "Ah

yes, the motor-cars—I used them all up in that one circus show, Titus, and the priests of Jove haven't deigned to cough up another one."

"And how's Epaminondas of Alexandria?" I said pointedly.

"Oh, we tortured him. Didn't get anything, though; it seems that his 'visions from the future' have ceased. At least we got all the shipbuilding secrets from him before he passed on, or else we'd lose all contact with the New World. But you're changing the subject," he said warningly.

"Of course, my lord. The spectacle."

"Do you remember . . . Marcus Ulpius Trajanus?"

"How could I forget? Brilliant strategist. Taught me everything I know, Trajan did. Very clever of him to lead the Dacians up the wrong way on the Danube. . . ."

"A little too brilliant," said Domitian. "Oh, he had plans—big plans. Subjugate the Parthians. Blah blah blah. Well, we got Cappadocia out of it, but after that he went a bit far—wanted to march on up the Tigris and push the Parthians into India or some other such grandiose notion. Fortunately, I was able to send him off to subdue the Seminolii, an absolutely frightful tribe of Terra Novan savages. Maybe I should recall him, but you know how it is. These ships—even with Epaminondas' improvem— I mean the revelations of Jupiter Optimus Maximus—take a year to get here. And as it happens, the Parthians are attacking now."

"Which Parthians, sire? I thought they were all wrangling over the throne since old Vologesus died."

"God knows. Some petty king of theirs, fancies himself Vologesus's successor, busy reuniting the place. Just a few thousand of them, Titus old chap, I'm sure they'll easily be defeated by one of our matchless legions, eh, what? I wouldn't even bother with it much, except that . . . the point is, my precious aurochs herds are in danger."

"Excuse me, Sire, but . . . I've been on campaign so long. . . ."

"The aurochs herds, you fool! You know, *bison*. I've been breeding them in Cappadocia for the arena. Good grazing, you know. You've no idea what trouble it is to capture the damned creatures, to send good legionaires up through Dacia and into the forests of Sarmatia north of the Black Sea . . . and every one of the soldiers itching to slaughter barbarians! And since the aurochs have been rendered virtually extinct by the demands of the games—you remember Vespasian and his hundred-day opening celebration of the Coliseum, don't you?—these Imperial aurochs are the only ones to be had on

short notice. I understand that gigantic ones roam the Great Plains of Lacotia in Nova Terra, but shipping costs are prohibitive. I'd have to impose some capricious tax, on adultery or theatergoers or pumpkins."

"I see."

"You'll do more than see! You'll lead the expeditionary force, that's what you'll do!"

"Yes, my lord," I said, my heart sinking. At least I would miss the reign of terror which, rumor had it, Domitian was about to instigate. I had no desire to end up being devoured by lions—or crocodiles, I reflected grimly as I saw them being released into the flooded arena to mop up the survivors of the sea-battle.

"You'll take the Thirty-fourth," he said. "What a spectacle! I may even come and watch the carnage."

"But your subjects need you here in Rome, Caesar," I said.

"Beware, beware, I've a purge coming. Your best bet is to be far from here; and fighting is, after all, the only thing you do well."

That was true. I remembered the last major purge; for a moment, after twenty-odd years, I saw my father as he lay dying on a couch, back on the estate with the olive-groves. "Thank you, Caesar, for the signal honor," I said, going down on one knee; but Domitian was busy shooting the crocodiles, cackling with glee as the draining arena churned red.

We set sail shortly from Brundisium. We used traditional triremes, because it wasn't too far; but to show our status as purveyors of the Imperial Wrath, we were preceded and followed by a full escort of the new fast little ships. They wove in and out of our old-fashioned ones, making a thorough nuisance of themselves.

The Thirty-fourth was garrisoned in Thrace at the time, fresh from its foray into the land of the Dacians. My tutor Nikias was there, wizened but waggish as ever. We marched eastward.

At first it was clear that we were in the land of the Pax Romana. Town after town followed the prefabricated Roman pattern: country estates of the rich, a temple to the local god and another to Jove or Augustus or someone, a circus for family entertainments, an enormous public baths, insulae apartment complexes for the poor, markets, and so forth. The terrain would change from the hills of Bithynia to the plains of Galatia, but the towns looked all alike; it was one of the less agreeable aspects of the empire.

Naturally I adhered to strict discipline throughout. I didn't hesitate to have men flogged or executed, and all down the good straight Roman roads I never once heard a sour rhythm in the thump, thump,

"Why should I? We are all equal; as their chief I shall certainly advise them, but public opinion may gainsay me."

What a way to run an army. "Are you sure you're the great Aquila who vanquished Pomponius Piso?"

"Ah, that funny little Roman who watched from afar and never once got a spot of blood on his toga! That was a wonderful war indeed. Some mercenaries of yours, from Hispania I believe, taught us the art of taking scalps, which we have adopted into our culture . . ." For the first time I noticed the grisly assortment that dangled from his waistband. ". . . but you Romans didn't play by the rules. After you lost the war, you didn't return to your own land. Now that I have seen your land I can understand why, though."

What! This man dared to impugn the sacred name of Rome? I had a mind to have him flogged immediately, whitehaired though he was. "How can you possibly say this?"

"Ugh! Your crowds, the noise of your thoroughfares, the ugly monstrosities you call palaces, the stone images that you dote on and pray to . . . I thought I was in Hell itself, General. Where I live the land is green for a thousand miles, and the brooks are clear and men's hearts soar like hawks. Much like this Cappadocia which you are even now despoiling with aqueducts that change the flow of nature, with circuses that exterminate whole species of beasts—"

"That's enough," I said. "We'll fight this war without you! Go home!"

"How can we? We no longer have a home. Our sacred burial grounds were razed to make room for a public baths. An evil spirit has descended upon our tribe, don't you see, and there isn't much we can do about it. We went hungry; we ate even our own dogs, such was our shame. That is why we took Lucretius Lupus up on his offer to come to Rome. We look for an honorable war in which to redeem ourselves—we didn't know that Lucretius Lupus had signed us up to kill Numidian archers in the cīrcus for the general amusement. But the Pater Maximus Candidusque heard our plea with compassion; that is why we're here. . . ."

"I see," I said without conviction. I was resigned to an ignominious defeat. I'd already lost one eagle after all, and in the days of the Republic I would probably already have committed suicide, but such was the decadence to which contemporary society had fallen that I did not even contemplate such a step. I decided to dismiss them for now and get back to serious work. "Go see the quaestor, Quintus Publius Cinna; he'll feed and pay you. You'll have to pitch castra outside, but in the morning I'll assign a detail to help you dig fossae

and build vallae."

"Bah!" the old man snorted. "Are we women, that we must hide behind trenches and walls? We will put our tipis at the foot of this hill, in the very sight on the enemy—"

"But their catapultae—their ballistae—"

"What do a few machines matter? Since we have lost our burial grounds we do not care to live." So saying the old savage made a gesture of dismissal at me—*me!* and swept out; the weird parade followed him, silent as shadow. Even the dogs made no noise. When I returned to my tent it was as if the whole thing had been a dream.

At dawn, driven by curiosity, I rode out of the camp with Nikias and a couple of tribunes. I was hoping that the Terra Novans would miraculously have vanished, but far from it: an encampment lay at the foot of the hill, just as Aquila had promised. If the enemy wanted to storm our castra it would probably be over the Terra Novans' dead bodies.

What an undisciplined hodgepodge of a castra it was!

Their tents, scattered without any pattern or thoroughfare, were shaped like inverted funnels of the type alchemists use for straining their filtrates. Infants squalled; horses were tethered at random; and the tents, which seemed to be of the hides of cows or aurochs, stretched over a crude frame of poles, were decorated with crude likenesses of animals and men. No doubt Domitian found these savages comical; lacking his sense of humor, I found them rather pitiable.

And were they engaged in drill-exercises? Or marching up and down the hill to keep in shape for the coming conflict? Not a bit! The men, all naked save for scant loincloths, beads, feathers, and soft leather caligae, were lazing about in clumps, muttering in their guttural tongue.

I saw Aquila among them.

"*Ave,* General," he said, looking up. "The Parthians have mobilized a wing of their army; I believe it's young Chosroes leading them. They're on their way."

"How in heaven could you know such a thing?"

Aquila got up and pointed to the east.

"Whatever do you mean?" At the limit of my vision, a hillock much like our own seemed to be emitting little puffs of smoke.

"Ah, some of our braves are restless, General, you see. They decided to go for a closer look. Those are smoke signals."

"Secret codes in smoke? Good heavens, how sophisticated," I said;

thump of infantry, nor did the legion's eagles once waver as the aquiliferi held them high. In spite of himself, Father had made a man of me.

When I got to Cappadocia I found that Domitian had been grossly misinformed.

The Parthian host had pushed right through the mountains and into the western plain of Cappadocia, where lies a great salt lake. We were outnumbered five to one, and they had already taken the border town of Domitianopolis, only a year old. The precious herds of aurochs and their grazing grounds were behind the enemy lines!

I did my dogged best. We set up castra about a mile from where they were, up the side of a hill, and engaged them in the traditional manner, to little avail. There were just too many of them. In the second battle I lost one of my eagles, the sacrificial ram had three livers and and its heart on the wrong side, and I sat down to compose a letter to Caesar asking for help. I retired my legion to the next town, Trajanopolis (ah, human vanity) and prepared for reinforcements.

Some weeks later came the reply, as I was having my back rubbed in the local baths:

To Titus Papinianus, Dux of the Thirty-fourth, greeting.

Well, Titus old boy, got more than you bargained for, eh? Well, there's not too much I can do. Terra Nova's acting up—for some reason the Seminolii (who are a union of the southeastern savages, formed when we drove the Chrichii, the Chirochii and the Choctavii southwards, and these barbarians interbred with certain of our runaway Nubian slaves) think there's something wrong with our teaching them to take baths and go to the circus and so on. Trajan is busy quelling them—only the northern provinces, Iracuavia and Lacotia, are friendly.

So I'm afraid there's little I can do, unless I want to expose some other border elsewhere.

A curiosity, though, Titus. In his last shipment of entertainers for the arena, the impresiario Lucretius Lupus, who is vacationing in Terra Nova, sent me a whole tribe of Lacotians. Their leader, Aquila (actually some barbaric tonguetwister, but it *means* eagle) was the very man who defeated Pomponius Piso thirty-five years ago. They were supposed to do battle against Numidian archers in the Coliseum, but . . . why not?

I'm sending them on the next ship. Who knows, perhaps these Lacotians may know something—and they're screamingly funny besides. Fight well—come back with your shield or on it, as the saying goes.

Ave atque vale,

Titus Flavius Domitianus, Caesar, Augustus, Imperator, Pater Patriae, Pater Maximus Candidusque, and various other titles, your Emperor and God.

Apparently I *was* a victim of the purge, after all. But at least I would fulfill my childhood dream of meeting one of those legendary Terra Novan savages face to face, before I died gloriously in battle.

It had been an exhausting day. We had returned to the old castra, and I was studying the war histories, trying to work out a viable stratagem, and—for fear of keeping the legion too idle—had detailed two maniples of infantry to dig more trenches and build more ramparts. Alone in the shade of my praetorium with a flagon of Chian wine, I tried different ways of deploying our meager artillery, our scorpiones, ballistae and catapultae, by arranging pebbles around a clay model of the terrain. About two thousand men, a third of the legion, were dead or wounded. It was depressing.

I'd fallen asleep at the table. A lamp burned still, causing the shadows to flit along the flaps of my praetorium. I was in my bare tunic; outside, guards watched, their pila crossed over the entrance.

Suddenly I opened my eyes.

The shadow on the wall . . . was there someone in the room with me? I listened. Was there a breathing? Ah no, my own, but—

There. A shadow on the wall, dancing against the quivering lamplight . . . I reached for my dagger. It was jerked out of my hands. I whirled round. In the eerie flickering, an apparition leered at me.

"Jupiter defend me!" I cried, doing every avert-the-omen sign I could remember.

The ghost did not disappear. It didn't move either. I took a good cool look at it (I knew by now I must be dreaming, or else why would the guards not have noticed?) and Virgil's description of the hell-beings of Avernus, whom Aeneas saw on his descent into Hades, was nothing compared to this—

It was a weatherbeaten face with a hooked nose and hawklike brown eyes, and it was painted in garish reds and yellows and striped with black. Its hair was long and white, and in a headband a number

of eagle feathers stuck out.

It was almost naked; it stooped with age, and its chest sagged like an old man's. A breechclout of some kind of leather hid its privates. It smelled of some strange oil; if it had bathed at all, it was no Roman bath it took.

It grinned at me.

"Who in Hades are you?" I gasped at last, when pinching myself several more times resulted only in an itchy arm. "And how did you get in here?"

It shrugged. "I've never yet met a Roman I couldn't creep up on," it said genially.

"You mean you're—"

"*Hechitu welo*. I am Aquila the Barbarian."

"Oh, but you *do* speak Latin, I see."

"What do you think? We've been taking your baths, reading your ghastly poets, and watching your indecently gory spectacles for the past thirty-five years."

So this was the famous tactician who had demolished the legions of Pomponius Piso! "I'm pleased," I said, "to have such a distinguished leader as yourself working under my command."

"Under *your* command!" The savage began to cackle. I was somewhat disgruntled; he said, "The White and Greatest Father said nothing about working under anybody. We came of our own free will, in friendship, to make war with honor if we so choose. Do you have any wine?"

"Oh. Sorry." I picked up the flagon to pour some, but he relieved me of the whole thing and begun to guzzle. "And your men? How many are there?"

"How should I know? Who can count the trees of the forest?"

"Show me then." I lifted the tent-flaps; outside, the two guards lay bound and gagged. The moon was full, and a fire was roaring at the crossroads of the via principalis and the via praetoria. I saw them in the half-light, a comical procession such as you might see in one of Plautus's farces.

Some of the men were mounted; their horses were painted as bizarrely as they were themselves. Some wore their hair braided in the Gaulish manner, but unlike the Gauls' it was well-oiled and sleek. Feathers adorned their heads. They had little armor, although a few had borrowed cuirasses and one or two sported ill-fitting helmets. Some were bare-chested; others had bewildering neckpieces hung with beads, animal claws, sea shells, and silver denarii. All the way down the via principalis they came. It was amazing that

they had made no noise. Their women followed, carrying burdens, or leading dogs with packs tied behind them.

"Are these," I asked Aquila, "my reinforcements? Can they take orders?"

"I don't know," Aquila said. "Is there good fighting to be had here?"

"Well, there are twenty thousand Parthians back there," I said, jerking my thumb eastward.

"And who might the Parthians be?"

"Parthians," I said (slowly, in the legionaries' pidgin Latin, so they'd understand every word) "are a race of extremely wicked people from the East, who revile the name of Rome and seek, in their overweening hubris, to rob us of our territory and set up a rival empire of their own. They have already taken Domitianopolis and are about to ravage all Cappadocia."

"And what about the Cappadocians? Perhaps they would prefer the Parthian masters to the Romans?" he said with a nasty chuckle.

What ignorant idiots! I cursed Domitian for playing this terrible trick on me. "Obviously," I said with painstaking clarity, "it is the destiny of Rome to rule the world; the Emperor, who is a god and bloody well ought to know, is divinely charged with the right to conquer all inferior nations! Everyone knows that. I mean, you Lacotians have been Roman citizens for some time now, haven't you? What a ridiculous thing to be arguing about, with those beastly Parthians beating at the very gates of the Empire. . . ."

"You Romans never listen, do you? By what right, pray, are *you* in Cappadocia, as opposed to the Parthians or indeed, the Cappadocians?"

Casuistry has never been my strong point. Nikias could never get me to understand the simplest Platonic dialogue, so you can imagine my confusion as I faced this foul-stenched savage who was making me defend the obvious. I glared at these Terra Novans, getting very red in the face. "Damn it, we *own* this land here!" I said.

"What a strange philosophy! How can land be owned? You Romans came charging into Lacotia, you gave us horses and pushed us out of the forests into the plains. What we had we shared with you, but you wanted everything. And all you give us is those bloody spectacles. You don't have true wars, wars that hone a man's spirit and sharpen his senses; you have wasteful wars in which men are like the cogs of your motor-cars and ships. I do not come to fight in your war. The others, of course, may do exactly as they wish."

"You're not going to give them any orders?"

in truth I could hardly make it out at all, in the dazzling sunlight; and I was certain that Aquila was having me on. "From behind enemy lines, no less! How large was the party you sent out?" I asked sarcastically.

"What party? You know how young men are. I could not restrain them from this display of bravery. . . ."

"Perhaps there is something in your savage tactics, Aquila," I said. "I shall look forward to your fighting by my side—"

"And whyever should I do that?" said the chieftain. His puzzlement seemed genuine.

I threw my hands up in despair. "Oh, Marcellus—"

The tribune by that name rode up to me. "Tell the signifer and the aquiliferi to ready their banners. Let the tubicines stand ready to sound my orders, and let the cornicines be not far behind, to relay the commands to the appropriate maniples."

"Yes, General. Any particular formation?"

I sighed. "Oh, acies triplex, I suppose." A doomed general might as well go out in good classical style.

"You haven't much time, General," Aquila said, chuckling, "they're due in about five minutes."

"How do you know?" I said, knowing that he would only come up with some outrageous boast of his men's prowess.

"Oh, I've been putting my ear to the ground—"

Suddenly an earsplitting din rent the air. My horse reared up. I waved vaguely to the tribune. Somewhere a bucina wailed, and then I heard the shouts of thousands of men as they fell into the three lines of Julius Caesar's favorite formation. I heard the deep-voiced tuba bray and be echoed by the shrill screech of cornua.

"Have fun," Aquila shouted after me as I spurred my horse down the hill.

At sunset we straggled back to the castra, roundly beaten. I didn't even want to reckon the casualties. I found my way to the praetorium and summoned Nikias to me. We had run out of the good Chian wine and were down to cheap Italian wines, but I was past caring. I downed a whole pitcher of it before Nikias arrived.

"Sit at the table, Nikias. There, opposite me, like you used to when you taught me all those contracted verbs. Did you bring your pen and parchment?" He opened his tool-box.

"Letters to write?" he said.

"Yes, I want to dictate a letter to Caesar. But first . . . write me up a document of manumission."

"You wish to free a slave, master Titus?" An expression of alarm crossed his face.

"Yes. You." The oil lamp sputtered briefly; the wick was low. The tent dimmed; the shadows deepened.

"You're not planning to—"

"Yes, as a matter of fact I am. You can hold the sword while I run on it. But I want you to be a free man first."

"That's absurd! We Greeks have always considered the Roman predilection for suicide to be wasteful and unaesthetic, and—" He was in tears suddenly.

We were both sobbing our guts out, recalling the happy days of the estate with the olive-orchard and the motor-car, wallowing in paroxysms of grief, when—

Behind me, in the tent, someone cleared his throat.

I nearly fell out of the chair.

"Am I interrupting something?"

"Aquila!" I was almost incoherent. "How dare you interrupt this most private moment, you impudent savage—"

"There now, there now. I have no wish to see you suffer so. I come to offer help."

"Help?"

As I looked around my tent, other savages resolved out of the shadows. Far from having an intimate tête-a-tête with my tutor and friend of thirty-five years, I might as well have been a clown in a Plautus comedy, waving my leather phallus at the hooting masses.

"These are," said Aquila, "some of the young braves of my tribe. Here is Ursus Erectus . . . Nimbus Rufus . . ." The names were, of course, in his savage speech; I have translated them into a humanly comprehensible tongue. ". . . Alces Nigra . . . Lupus Solitarius. . . ."

"I am beyond your help," I said. "I'm weary. Domitian surely intends me to die here, and he shall be satisfied. I don't know what I've done to offend Caesar, but it appears to be the will of the gods—at least the will of one rather insistent one—"

"There now, don't kill yourself," Aquila said. "These four braves are bored. They've decided to invade the enemy camp, and they won't rest unless they penetrate to the tent of their very leader."

"What rubbish! Four people against ten, twenty thousand? Your boasts have been plentiful, but this one—"

"The Lacotia do not boast," the chief said matter-of-factly. "You may have noticed that we sneaked up to your tent and were able to watch your entire little scene with Nikias unobserved. Rather maudlin, I may add."

I could not deny that. "Since you insist—"

"Oh, they certainly do. They haven't had a good raid since they crossed the Big Water."

"Very well then," I said, trying to gather up what shreds of dignity I yet possessed. "You shall each have a standard issue of weaponry: pilum, gladius and scutum. Nikias, see to that. You will depart immediately."

"Thanks for the weapons, but our own will do very nicely," Aquila said. "As for leaving immediately, though—"

"Well?"

"They can't leave for at least two hours. A man's got to look his best for a sacred thing like war. It'll take them that long to get their warpaint on. . . ."

"What? What kind of fighting is this, where you stop to adjust your makeup and your hair? Is this a war or is it a Corinthian brothel?"

"Relax, General!" Aquila said jovially. "Honor and glory will soon be ours." I blinked and they were gone.

For the next five or six hours I sat twiddling my thumbs. Even if they didn't come back, I reflected, they might be able to slip into Chosroes's tent and assassinate him. A dirty trick, and hardly the Roman way to do business—my father would turn over in his grave!—but I could salvage my conscience by noting that savages could hardly be expected to know about the refinements of civilized warfare.

I pulled out my military texts and studied them. But I was too nervous to concentrate. I pulled out some light reading, one of the scientiae fictiones by the Judaean Asimianus, who had flourished in the wake of all the marvels invented by Epaminondas of Alexandria whom Domitian had had executed. It was an idle speculation: future roads with fleets of motor-cars racing the wind at speeds of twenty miles per hour! Nevertheless, the sort of mindless thing I needed.

I was a little way into the epic poem *Fundatio: Fundatio et Imperium: Fundatio Secunda,* which predicts, amusingly, that Rome will collapse and we will enter an age of barbarity mitigated only by the foresight of one Arrius Seldonius . . . when—

"What's that noise?" I shouted. Nikias was awake too, and hollering for the tribunes. "It's an ambush!"

I staggered outside.

Coming up the via principalis of the castra, the four Lacotians were dancing, screaming incantations in their language, and hitting

their lances on shields. Alarums were sounding around the camp. Centurions rushed hither and thither, bumping into each other and tripping.

The Lacotians were cavorting around in a bacchanalian frenzy now, and I saw that fresh scalps dangled from their spears and their facepaint was streaked with blood.

When they saw me they calmed down a little. "What on Earth—" I said. They began clamoring in their tongue all at once. I finally saw Aquila, shuffling up the via principalis.

"Victory!" he said. The braves began to throw assorted spoils at my feet. Chests of precious metals. An aurochs hide. Parchments written in the Parthian language. Aquila came forward and embraced me, beaming and smelling like a he-goat.

"They reached the tent of Chosroes?" I stared dumbly as one of the braves hurled what was unmistakably Chosroes's armor at my feet. I could hardly believe my luck. Surely the Parthians (whose military organization was far less disciplined than ours, and who would be thrown into utter chaos by the death of a leader) would be confused enough to return whence they came.

"You have evidence of Chosroes's death?" I said excitedly. "His head, perhaps, or some other such trinket I can send to Domitian?"

A pause. Aquila spoke to his four savages while I stood nervously. Finally he said, "I have the honor to report that all four of my braves have counted coup on the Parthian leader."

I smelled a rat. "Counted coup? What does that mean?"

"Among my people it is considered the mark of highest bravery to touch the enemy with one of these" —he held up a short, cudgel-like baton— "and return alive. *Killing* the man hardly seemed necessary."

"You took these spoils and you didn't . . . even . . . harm. . . ."

"Oh, he was harmed all right. Nasty bruise on his forehead, given by Ursus Erectus, here. And Nimbus Rufus fetched him a smart one on the posterior—he won't be able to sit down for a week."

"I want him killed! I want him killed!"

There was a terse discussion amongst them; then Aquila turned gravely to me. "Alas, General, they've decided they don't want to kill him. Seems that he fought so gallantly that he's won their respect, or something."

"But I command it!"

"We've been through all this before."

I stalked into my tent. "Nikias! The sword!" I shouted. "It's now or never!" Nikias followed me, shaking all over; poor soul, I'd never

dictated his certificate of manumission, and I was too distraught to think of it now.

Aquila—of all the impudence—followed me in. "Come now, General!" he said. "I'll never understand you palefaces. Here we come from over the Big Water to inspire you with noble deeds and courageous acts, and what do you do? You decide to kill yourself! It's cowardice pure and simple. All you Romans are cowards. When you fight you put up barriers of metal so you can jab safely at the enemy. You throw great balls of flame with your thunder-machines and watch from a distance. You are no true men, but a gaggle of women. Or if you are men then you are hawks whose wings Wakantanka, the Great Mystery, has clipped. You are devils who have taken paradise from us. It grieves me to see such cowardice, for it declares your subhumanity to all men." He paused for breath.

"Are you calling me a coward? Me. Titus Papinianus, son of Caius Papinianus, nicknamed The Stalwart, equestrian by birth, dux by the emperor's decree, scourge of the Dacians, a coward?"

"The same."

I leaped for the man's throat. Deftly he stepped aside and I went crashing into the wall, ripping a hole in the fabric. "You see what I mean?" he said calmly. "Only a coward would attack a man old enough to be his father."

I lunged again; this time I knocked my head on a tent pole. "I'll prove it to you," I said. "Send me your strongest brave and I'll—"

"Brute force won't show anything," Aquila said. "However, if you wish to convince me of your bravery. . . ."

I waited, glaring at him.

"Tomorrow," he said, "I have a mind to ride far to the east, behind the enemy lines; to see the limits of your Roman empire. And, while I have no enmity for your Parthians, yet I will ride into their very maw and taunt them, so that you will see that Aquila is no woman. You see me here, a man past eighty, yet I will do this thing. Do you dare come with me?"

A general doesn't permit himself to indulge in personal challenges, I told myself brutally. My father had beaten good Roman ethics into me often enough. But when I looked at this old savage something in me cracked. Here they were, these people who had stolen straight into the enemy camp and yet had scorned the easy victory of despatching the enemy leader. What was it about Aquila and the Lacotians? After all, they *had* defeated Pomponius Piso himself. Perhaps they were sorcerers; perhaps they had some cloak of invisibility or potion of invincibility. I had to know.

I no longer cared about Domitian, or his purge, or his precious aurochs herds for which we had wasted the lives of thousands of good legionaires. All I was wanted to do was teach this insolent, supercilious savage a lesson he would never forget.

The sun had not risen when we set off down the hill. There were four of us: Nikias and I came in simple tunicae, although it galled me to be so disguised; Ursus Erectus, the young brawny one I had met the previous evening; and Aquila himself, who came clothed in a painted aurochs hide and wearing a bundle around his neck which he called his fascis medicinae.

Exchanging not a word, we rode towards the east, the sky gray-purpled by impending dawn. At the horizon was a line of low hills, at the foot of which the Parthians lay encamped; beyond them, I knew, was Domitianopolis.

"To the north," said Aquila, bringing his roan abreast of me, "there is a way around the hill. My braves found it yesterday. The Parthians, being the invaders, are unfamiliar with the country, yet they have not the Lacotian knack for sizing up the terrain; this is to our advantage." His smugness was annoying me; and also the fact that he was easing himself into the position of leader. I thanked the gods that my cohorts were not here to see me made a fool of.

"Shall I believe this braggart?" I asked Nikias in Greek.

"Watch it!" Aquila said in the same tongue. "There are Greeks in every village in Lacotia, for we find the tales of their Homer far nobler than your superficial love-poems and the boasts of your historians."

"Is there no way we can speak privately?" I said, frustrated. Nikias and I lashed our mounts on ahead; but I confess I did not know which way to go next, and had to allow the Lacotians to slip into the lead again.

Presently we tethered our horses in a copse at the foot of the hill and Aquila began picking his way through a rocky trail that led upwards. He moved swiftly, gracefully, like a wild animal. Ha! I thought, remembering one of the popular theories about the Terra Novans, which averred that they were indeed part animal, thus lacking souls and being oblivious to pain.

"I see you've snooped around here before," I said.

"No," said Aquila, "I'm just following the signs left by last night's raiding party."

"What signs?"

Quickly he pointed around us. Here an arrangement of leaves and

twigs, there a few rocks heaped in a natural-seeming pattern. These he claimed to be sophisticated messages that warned of pitfalls, unsteady footholds, and the like. For a moment, I almost believed him. Then I realized that reading the signs of nature was a special ability of such primitive sorcerers, and that he was just having a little fun with me. I laughed at myself for being so gullible.

In a few hours we were overlooking the Parthian host from behind—

It took my breath away. Their tents were gaudy—brash reds, vibrant oranges, vivid against the green. They stretched far into the hill's shadow. There were chariots, points of fire in the carpet of grass. There were alien standards. There were soldiers crawling like ants: I couldn't begin to recognize all the types of costumes. And in the center of it all, an oriental palace in fabric, was the tent of their leader. How unlike my sparse, classical praetorium, or the rough hides of the Lacotians' tipis!

"There are many," I whispered. It wasn't like the Dacians, who were, after all, barbarians not much more advanced than the Lacotians.

"Bah! Old women, the lot of them. They are river-reeds that sway when a child blows on them. They are even less courageous than the Romans, whom I once subdued. . . ."

"Will you taunt them now?"

"No," Aquila said. "First I've a mind to see your precious Cappadocia. Let's go east."

"Very well," I said grimly, ready for anything. Now that I had seen the extent of the Parthian host I knew that death would not be far. I felt a reckless exhilaration, as though I were a child again.

We scrambled down cautiously, fetched our horses and rounded the hill. A little forest hugged the eastern slope of it; and then we were on a plain. Lush grass thinned in the distance as the hills rose.

Suddenly there was a burst of gibberish from the lips of Ursus Erectus, who had been silent all day. He was pointed wildly at the far hills. I squinted.

There was . . . something moving. At first it seemed like a scar, a brown patch, on the hillside; and then I saw it move.

"The pta! Our sacred pta!" Aquila cried. He sounded younger. "At last our tribe may be freed of its curse, may find new hunting grounds! Would that I were a young brave, to find such pta and pte. . . ."

Without waiting, reckless, the two Lacotians spurred their horses into a gallop. Nikias and I caught up with them, and soon I saw the

brown patch resolve into little brown patches, my vision blurred from the horseback riding—

"The Imperial aurochs herd!" Nikias shouted.

I knew that such creatures existed in the new world, but I had not known that they would exert such power over the savages. . . .

The Lacotians were laughing now, whooping with glee, throwing their lances and catching them as they raced forward—

They were grazing. Thousands of them. Majestic creatures, bearded and sleek-furred.

And then, as we passed a rock-mound, Aquila's steed stopped dead and whinnied.

I slowed to a trot behind him. A sickening sight greeted me.

They were lying in the grass, one or two of them, rotting. Carrion birds had settled on them, and when I looked up I saw more vultures wheeling.

The bison had been completely flayed.

"Why?" Aquila screamed at the sky, raging. A grief fell like a summer thunderstorm on the two of them. I saw that Aquila wept: copiously, without shame, like a woman. We rode on, but now their demeanor was grim.

As we neared the herd we found more carcasses. Always the skin would be stripped from them and their flesh remain mouldering in the heat. Aquila's weeping did not cease.

And then, peering from behind a boulder, we saw mounds of piled pelts. And armed guards watching over them.

"Poaching," I said, "on a grand scale. At this rate they'll have killed and skinned the entire herd by year's end."

Aquila said, "Can this be true? Can they really take the skins and leave the flesh to rot, disrupt man's balance with nature?"

"Probably they plan to trade them further east. To the people of India, or those folk with skins of gold who inhabit the lands beyond, these pelts may be worth more than silks and spices. . . ."

"We have rediscovered paradise," said Aquila, "only to lose it a second time."

The Lacotians exchanged words rapidly in their tongue. I caught the words **pta** and **pte,** which seemed to be the male and female aurochs. Then Aquila turned to me and said, his voice quavering with emotion, "My heart is like a stone, General. I can no longer even weep. When your people drove us into the great plains and gave us horses, we hunted the aurochs and our bellies were full. We took no more than what would fill us, and the hide and the bones we made good use of. When we were full we made war: holy war,

not a war of senseless killing, but war to strengthen a man's heart and give him honor. Now when I look upon this land I see what could be another paradise. We could be happy here, for when we hunt we are part of nature's harmony. But these Parthians hunt wantonly, they take only the skins and discard the meat. They must truly be cursed. I cannot bear to look upon this—" He faltered. "I have seen too much. I am too old. It is a good day to die. I shall lie here on the grass until death comes for me."

I was moved by his words. The savage spoke of strange ways and customs; but when I thought more deeply I saw that we were kin. For my father had had much the same thoughts, the day he learned of the Emperor's disfavor and took it upon himself to execute sentence. But I didn't want Aquila to die. I said, "Old man, last night you forced me to live. You called me a coward. Must I remind you?"

Aquila seemed puzzled for a moment. Then he chuckled and said, "Of course, you're right. That isn't the answer at all, is it? Obviously we shouldn't take this lying down. Instead, we'll take on the whole bloody pack of them."

"You'll fight beside us?"

"What do you think?"

"So finally I'll get to see the fabled Lacotian art of warfare . . . the unorthodox tactics so elliptically alluded to by Pomponius Piso in his *Memoir of the Lacotian Wars*?"

"Huka hey! Alea jacta est!"

Later I squatted uncomfortably in Aquila's tent. There were four or five of them, the Quaestor, one or two of my tribunes, sweating in their full regalia, Nikias taking notes, and me. Aquila pulled out a pipe, filled it with herbs from his fascis medicinae, and lit it, whereupon a foul stench filled the tent and I could hardly see for the smoke; this he puffed on, and then insisted I do the same. On complying I seemed to fall into a shadow world; everything felt hazy, unreal. So this was one of their secrets . . . a magic drug that no doubt rendered them invulnerable.

"Does the nearby town have a public baths?" said Aquila.

"Of course," I said hazily. "How could a Roman town not have any?"

"I want exclusive use of them for my braves for a day."

"Righty-ho." Perhaps they *were* getting civilized.

"I want some trees, felled in a ritual way which I shall prescribe, set up at the foot of this hill—"

"Aha! A Lacotian war machine!" I knew they'd have something

up their sleeve; for magic, in itself, is rarely effective unless blended with careful planning, as I had myself learned in my dealings with the Dacians and Picts.

"You might call it that," Aquila said, and he started to giggle ferociously.

A few more puffs, and it was as if I was seeing the world from under water. The Lacotians rippled. In the distance, Father drove up in his motor-car, scolding me, and off in a corner Domitian was shooting some chimaera full of arrows, and I was laughing helplessly. . . .

There was a great deal of grumbling from the townspeople when I requisitioned the public baths. But eventually we barricaded them off and the Lacotians—perhaps two hundred strong—trooped inside. A maniple was despatched to a nearby forest to fell the trees Aquila had requested, accompanied by one of their priests or homines medicinae who would perform the appropriate ritual.

After a while I wearied of pacing the colonnade outside the baths; I decided that I might as well join them. It's good to get the kinks out of your body before a major battle, even one you've little chance of surviving.

I went inside. Signs led to the tepidarium, caldarium and frigidarium. The place was unusually quiet. Normally the buzz of social banter never ceases at a baths. I disrobed in the vestiarium, which was piled high with the animal skins and feathers the savages wore, and then tried the caldarium.

I rubbed my eyes. At first you couldn't see for the steam, and then—

The pool proper had been drained. Lacotians squatted in ranks inside. Steam poured out from the heating-vents; the slaves must be working overtime underneath. Steam tendriled about them as they sat, unspeaking, each of them apparently lost in some private vision. Fetishes, the skulls of aurochs, ritual pipes littered the tile floor, which was a mosaic depicting the rape of the Sabine women. I made out Aquila, a shrunken man with age-blotched skin, kneeling in the center of the throng.

I descended into the empty pool, my feet smarting against the hot tiles.

"Ah, there you are, Aquila old chap!" I said. "Thought we ought to discuss a little strategy, eh, before tomorrow?"

Silence. The man's eyes stared ahead, far away. He didn't move.

"Hello? Hello?" I said.

He snapped to. "Oh, General Titus. Sshhh" —his voice dropped—

"wouldn't want to disturb these fellows, would you?"

"What's going on?"

"Lacotian custom. Sweat-bath, you know. Some of the men are—oh—far away, on spirit journeys. Usually we have special tents for this purpose, but it seemed a good idea to take advantage of your modern Roman technology. . . ." He fell into a trance again, and I couldn't rouse him.

I bathed alone in the tepidarium for a while and returned to castra, where an even more incredible sight awaited me.

At the foot of the hill, some distance eastward from the camp, several circles had been marked off with stones, aurochs skulls, pipes, and fetishes. At their centers stood the tree-trunks that my soldiers had felled, and from them radiated hundreds of strings.

"Ho, there!" I called out, dismounting. "What's the meaning of this?"

A tribune came puffing up. "General, these savages have gone out of their minds!"

"Is this some kind of war-engine?"

Distant hoofbeats. The Lacotians were returning from the city. In a moment they had all split into groups and were lined up naked in the circles.

"I don't rightly know, General, just *what* the blighters are up to. It could be some kind of rapid-firing slingshot, I suppose."

"No," I said, "those strings are strips of hide; anything for firing ammunition would require tormenta, twisted ropes with a spring action as in the catapultae. I can't see any possible use for them."

"Perhaps they mean to swing down on the strings, as apes with vines in Africa."

"Then surely they would camouflage the engines so that their swoopings might contain some element of surprise."

"Good heavens, sir, what are they doing now?"

One of the homines medicinae was solemnly mutilating the young men one after another, cutting slits under the skin of their chests, sliding in little sticks, and then attaching them to the poles by means of the strings. Another homo medicinae distributed rattles to them and placed little wooden flutes in their mouths. The braves gave no show of pain at all, but walked out to the edge of the circle, facing the center, stretching the strings to their limits.

"It seems awfully gruesome," Nikias said, approaching from the castra with welcome bowls of Lesbian wine, just purchased in the town.

All at once came the pounding of drums and a most monstrous

caterwauling from a group of old men, chanting a wavering, out-of-tune melody whose long notes were punctuated by peculiar rhythmic gurgling sounds. At this the braves began to dance and blow on their flutes, staring steadfastly at the sun, which was shining fiercely. As the men danced they tugged at the strings, trying, it seemed, to yank themselves free; blood spurted from their chests. The din was astonishing. Presently a crowd of legionaires had gathered, and were staring at this display, cheering and jeering with the typical Romans' love of spectacle; one might as well have been at the bloody circus. Even I, professional butcher as I am, felt queasy at this eerie exhibition.

I finally caught sight of Aquila, moving unconcernedly through the crowd.

"What the hell is going on?" I yelled above the cacophony.

"Oh, nothing," he said. "They are merely offering up their pain. It is the Sundance, you know. You do want to win the battle, don't you?"

"Yes, but—"

"They must dance," he said, "until the skin tears and they break free. After that they will dress in all their finery and go to war."

Children were running amok, poking at the men with grass blades. Women sang, their voices blending with the grunting hey-hey-hey of the old men.

"Do you mean to say," I began indignantly, "that you have made me go to all this trouble—just so you could have some horrid rite?" Never had these people seemed more alien to me. I had been wrong even to attempt to gain their co-operation. We were doomed, and I had only been stalling for time. The best thing would be to fling ourselves on the Parthians and die with a good grace.

Well, as if in answer to my sentiments, bucinae and cornua began to bray above the din. I looked to the east. A line of glitter was rolling slowly across the plain, like a monstrous worm of gold.

"The Parthians!" I cried. Instantly the tribunes were by my side.

"Aquila, enough of this rubbish!" I said. "We're in real trouble now, and we need all the men we've got! Let everyone grab a weapon!"

Aquila just laughed at me. "What?" he said. "This is a sacred thing the men do. We cannot interrupt it. When they are ready, they will come."

It was useless. I should have known better than to attempt to deal rationally with savages. Superstitious primitives. It was our job to civilize these people—with fire and sword if necessary—not reason with them. With a final shrug of exasperation, I mounted, barked

some orders to the tribune, which were presently relayed by tubae all over the castra above. Legionaires rushed for their shields and weapons, and the audience for the Lacotians' curious ritual of self-mutilation wilted away in an instant. . . .

I had barely two squadrons of cavalry, and all save one of my praefecti equitum had perished. These I held in reserve, placing them on the hillside under my own command. I had five cohorts of infantry and a scattering of auxiliaries: a few slingers, perhaps a hundred of the Cretan sagitarii, and so on. These, under the command of the quaestor Quintus Publius Cinna, I deployed, again in Julius Caesar's favorite acies triplex formation, in three lines directly facing the onslaught, the troops in front forming an iron barrier with their shields. The artillery I scattered at intervals throughout the lines.

As I shouted my commands and the tribunes hastened to obey, the Lacotians continued their frenzied dancing, jerking at the rawhide strings and wildly piping on their flutes, so that it was almost impossible to make myself heard. The tramp-tramp of the distant enemy was something you felt more than heard, like a heartbeat, an impalpable dread. It had oozed halfway across the plain now, that multicolored worm of an army, and there was no time to lose. I chose a little cliff from which to watch the fray, as far as possible from the distracting noise of the Lacotians' rites. Nikias was there; this time I remembered the certificate of manumission, and he was at my side a freeman and my hired scribe. Behind me I concealed the cavalry as best I could.

I gazed over the plain.

It seemed infinitely slow, the crawling forward of the enemy, from my lofty vantage point. But I knew there was little time. I saw Cinna ride back and forth behind the lines, haranguing the pedites.

The enemy stopped.

I looked them over. They were neat squares of color, each square perhaps a thousand men. We were strung out a long way, but not very deeply; it was only a matter of time before they broke through. I saw, in the distance, the range of foothills in which their camp nestled; behind them were the cursed aurochs herds which Domitian was about to make me die for.

I heard their trumpets sound. They charged in one chaotic melee: chariots, infantry, cavalry all jumbled together. It was their numbers that had been our bane, not their brilliant organization. The first wave crashed into our shield wall; the shields clanged open at

a single command and a volley of fire-arrows burst forth. Horses whinnied and perished. Chariots overturned and upset other chariots. But they kept coming.

And lo! Our wall of scuta was breached by a suicidal charioteer, and hundreds of the Parthians were streaming through the gap, swords waving! Even from on high I smelled the blood, and the dust clouds were dyed scarlet, obscuring the view. I averted my eyes; the sight of hacking and bloodletting was not new to me, and held no interest. It was now up to me to decide whether to condemn the cavalry too, or to sound the retreat and commit suicide. It had been hardly an hour, and the outcome was already clear.

"Nikias," I said, adopting a brusque tone to hide my sorrow, "bring the sword at once."

"Yes . . . master." His eyes were red. I did not weep—we had been through all that before, in the tent, when Aquila and his braves had so callously spied on us.

Suddenly—

An earsplitting screeching assailed my ears! Down below the fighting froze for a moment, the dust started to settle, everyone turned

and stared to the east—

Demons on horseback were charging from behind the enemy lines, firing streams of fire-arrows into the dumbfounded Parthian ranks. The figures were painted in dazzling colors, the horses' legs were decorated with bright lightning streaks, and they wore bonnets of feathers that trailed behind, and they were uttering such piercing screams as would make the very mummies burst from their pyramids. In the hills, I saw pillars of flame and smoke, and my spirits lifted. I knew the enemy camp was on fire. The Lacotians must have ridden as fast as the wind, and as silently, to have been able to accomplish all this.

Now the Parthians were scattering randomly, and my infantry were having an easy time of it as the Parthians rushed, crazed with fear, into their arms. I gave the order to give chase. The Lacotians had formed a circle of horsemen that surrounded the enemy host, and were riding around and around and firing.

"Quite a spectacle, eh, general?" I started. It was Aquila. He was mounted on a white horse, decorated with crimson lightning-stripes; his face was painted in red and white, and on his wrinkled brow sat a crown of feathers; behind him more feathers streamed. In his right hand he held high a feathered lance. He was magnificent. Although he wore no golden cuirass, his horse carried no gilt caparison, no cloak of purple flapped behind him . . . yet he looked like a god, his demeanor stern and implacable. The Parthians, who had never seen a Lacotian decked in his war regalia, must surely have thought them devils, for they are a superstitious folk, without the benefit of the Empire's enlightenment.

"Aquila!" I said. "You've saved us! I've a mind to make all the legionaires perform your Sundance from now on—"

"You are far from saved," he said. "Quickly. Bring your cavalry. Your men in the plain will pursue them; my men there will lure them. Meanwhile your cavalry and what remains of mine will round the hills, swifter than thought itself. If we become one with the wind, and soar like eagles, we may be able to head them off at yonder pass." He pointed to a crack, far off behind the enemy camp, which I could barely distinguish. But I wasn't going to argue now. I sent the herald with the summons and we were off.

The war-fever was in me now. We hurtled over the other side of the hill, Lacotians and Romans together, following Aquila's white steed. When we reached the pass I saw that Aquila's men had been busy indeed. For, as the Parthians fought their way through the bottleneck, pushed by our men and terrified out of their wits by the

screeching of the Lacotians, other Lacotians had been at work rousing the herds of aurochs. Hither and thither they galloped, in and out of the herd, prodding, poking, luring.

A few at a time, the Parthians broke through the pass—to run head-on into a stampeding herd of aurochs.

"Huka hey!" the Lacotians shouted in thunderous unison. Then they broke into a babble of warcries and shrill ululations, and charged frantically into the fray. Aquila turned to me and winked; then he too charged.

"Huka hey!" I yelled madly, wondering what it meant, as it finally dawned on me that a handful of eccentric savages had rescued the honor of Rome.

In the evening the women danced the scalps of the slain around a roaring fire, and the Lacotians feasted on fresh meat from the humps of aurochs. We Romans were all invited. In the midst of the festivities we had a surprise visitor—Domitian himself.

He came up the hill in a palanquin borne by eight burly slaves. Couches had been set up for the Romans, a little way off from the dancing; Aquila and I were quaffing Samian wine from the same goblet as though we'd known each other for ages. When Domitian stepped off the litter I gaped and dropped my goblet.

"No ceremony, Titus old boy," the Emperor said. "I told you, didn't I, that I'd half a mind to come along and observe the spectacle? And you didn't disappoint me. Ah, if only I could recreate this battle on the Campus Martius outside Rome . . . set up bleachers for the populace, with vending stands for cold drinks and sausages . . . how the people would love me! I imagine I could stave off assassination for quite a while with a show like that."

"Caesar—"

"Imagine it! This Sundance they've described to me—could it be done in the arena, do you think?"

"Certainly not," Aquila said. "It is a sacred thing."

"Oh, don't worry, old chap, I'm only joking. That's what I like about you savages though—you dare to contradict me, unlike these spineless Romans." I started to say something, but checked myself. "What's this you're eating, barbarian victuals? Let's try some." He stuffed a piece of roast aurochs haunch into his mouth. "You shall have a triumph, Titus! And I shall make you a procurator."

"I'm deeply flattered, Caesar," I said, hoping I would not be packed off to some rebellious wasteland like Judaea.

"Though, frankly, things haven't gone according to plan. I was

rather hoping you'd be out of my hair by now."

"Caesar is merciful."

"And as for you, Aquila—"

"O Pater Maximus Candidusque," Aquila said softly, "I have seen the land of my dreams. When I was a young brave I came to this land in a spirit journey. I knew that the old ways were dying in Lacotia, but still I hoped. . . ."

"Very well, old man," said Domitian. "You and your people shall stay here in Cappadocia. I only ask that you defend my herds. Take what you need for sustenance, and cull the best each year for my games, but protect them and see that they multiply."

When Aquila had translated these words to the Lacotians, they cheered the Emperor loud and long. Domitian beamed. He was like a child, really, and liked to do the right thing when it didn't involve too much work.

"As for you, Titus, what do you want?"

What did I want? I turned it over in my mind. I wanted to retire from fighting. I wanted a comfortable house in the country. Simple things. I didn't think the Emperor would understand, so I said, "I want whatever you want, my lord."

"Yes, yes, old chap. You're rather lucky in a way, you know, being an incompetent idiot and all that. No one of any competence has been permitted to rise in power ever since my father Vespasian became Emperor. Your well-meaning stupidity has served you well . . . and you're damned lucky besides! After your victories in Dacia you were on the short list for purging, you know . . . so what do you think of these barbarians, eh? Do you think you could whip them into shape, lead them down the golden path to Roman citizenship, and all that?"

"Well—er—"

"How succinct of you. Well, you're leaving for Lacotia right after the triumph—as my new governor."

I looked wildly about me. Was I seeing things, or had Aquila and Domitian just exchanged a sly wink? Mustering all my confidence, I said, my face getting redder by the second, "You can rely on me, Caesar. By next year, these barbarians will bloody well enjoy taking baths and going to spectacles. They'll read Virgil every morning before breakfast, and they'll all wear togas and speak Latin and they'll worship Venus and Mars and Jupiter and Minerva instead of their heathen idols, even if it kills me!"

I turned and saw Aquila guffawing uproariously. Then I took another swig of wine and laughed myself into a stupor.

LETTERS

Dear George,

I am writing this letter in the heat of emotion evoked by Elliott Scott Marbach's perfectly beautiful story "Other Wells, Other Saints."

I am sending this letter with a carbon copy because I want Mr. Marbach to have it. [Forwarded to author.]

I am 51 years young, have been reading science fiction since I was about 15 and have been blind since age 4 months because of spinal meningitis.

I have read several stories in science fiction and in main-stream fiction which featured blindness as an aspect for characters. In most of those stories I found realism in the way the authors dealt with blind people and aspects of blindness, but I have never felt the compassion with which Mr. Marbach dealt with both his protagonists—the narrator, accidentally blinded David, and the "projective-minded" Joe.

I hope this is the beginning of a long and highly successful career of story-selling for Elliott Scott Marbach.

An excellent, tear-jerking story like "Other Wells, Other Saints" is refreshing. I enjoy *IA'sfm*. I miss *Galaxy*, though. I also get disc-recordings of *Analog*, but I get more pleasure from *IA'sfm*, chiefly because I am a rapid Braille reader and derive much pleasure from gleaning the printed word from the page for myself.

I have never felt a desire to write my own science fiction; but I am and I hope I always will be an avid SF reader. Keep it coming!

Sincerely,

Anne Aussiker
Denver CO

Thank you. We are all of us delighted to have pleased you.

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Mr. Scithers, *et al.*:

As an entomologist whose joy in life is systematics (the classification and naming of things) I find myself often exasperated by the unbelievable confusion of SF authors when it comes to naming animals. As an example: J. P. Boyd, in "Moonbow" (May 11, 1981), names the native form "dipteran." Boyd noted that the terrestrial

counterpart has but two wings; the species on Moonbow had four. By nominate definition this creature *cannot* be a dipteran; the word diptera means "two-winged." At the very least, he should have name it *tetropteran* (four-winged). Furthermore, since "dipteran" would equate to the terrestrial insects (specifically, the true flies), it is a little confusing to later call the animal a bird (p. 25, *et seq.*).

Another gripe is the "biologist" who discovers some new organism and immediately proceeds to name it after himself. No way. There are nomenclatural codes for all the descriptive sciences, from astronomy to zoology; they uniformly reject that ploy. Somebody else may describe and formally name it after him, but he can't do it. And, by the way, discovering a new animal is no big deal (except for mammals and birds). Something like 10,000 new species of insects alone are described each year, and the end is not yet in sight. Estimates are that there are about a million to go!

One final point (for now) on names. Avram Davidson ("An Abundance of Dragons," 6 July 1981, p. 81) refers to *Coluber Quatuorlineatus;* in zoological nomenclature the second part of the binomial (in this case "*Quatuorlineatus*") is never spelled with a capital letter, even when the name is derived from a proper noun. Thus, *Bombus vosnesenskii* and not *B. Vosnesenskii,* even though named after Vosnesenskij. Botanical nomenclature does capitalize patronyms. So, the correct form for the snake's name would be *C. quatuorlineatus* (the four-lined *Coluber,* or the four-lined snake, since *Coluber* is a Latin word for snake). The generic name is *always* spelled with a capital and both are italicized.

Note to Avram Davidson: the correct spelling for the discipline is entomology; not entymology ("Who Fired the Phoenix," p. 58).

Davidson's article on dragons was very interesting, but I do believe that he really blew it. Almost as badly as another D——son who wrote about dragonflight. He may be satisfied with chain lightning in pursuit of "pearls" of ball lightning, but he can't pass the buck that way. I suppose that I shall have to submit an article to refute his, for dragons are quite real.

Sincerely yours,

Roy R. Snelling
655 N. Oakland #1
Pasadena, CA 91101

Sometimes I think, with quivering underlip: How are science fiction-writers suppose to know *all these things? And then I think: Sure! Science-fiction writers are supposed to know everything or else they*

can do something less demanding, like being President of the United States.

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Mr. Scithers:

Of all the science fiction magazines currently on the market, yours appears to be the one that maintains the closest relationship between its editorial staff and its readers. Few other periodicals actually ask their readers to help run them. When a story I send to *IA'sfm* is returned, you include with it a sheet of guidelines for authors and usually some individual criticism; I can learn what to avoid and what to aim for in the next story I write. Most editors return contributions with no more than a note of "Sorry, can't use."

If you do not mind another of the endless questions you must be receiving from would-be writers, here is one for your letters to the editor column. Do you notice, or would you hazard to predict, any major trends in science fiction? For example, are there any particular topics that editors and readers consider fashionable or timely? On the other hand, editors might dread a deluge of stories on scientific matters that have lately made the news or attracted controversy, such as genetic engineering, video innovations, or exploring the gas giant planets and their moons. In addition, do you detect any shifts in the readers' tastes, interests, and values that reflect current changes in society at large?

Since science fiction concerns so many aspects of the future, it is only natural that new authors who want to write in this field should speculate on the future of the genre. Any thoughts you can share on this subject will be useful to those of us who want to start publishing, but who have so far been perishing.

Sincerely yours,

Bridget Carmichael
Russellville AR

My own feeling is that the writers themselves introduce new themes and styles, and that it is impossible to predict what might be done. However, George is closer to the nuts-and-bolts of this matter, so what do you say, George?

—Isaac Asimov

Dr. Asimov is correct: the writers themselves—not the editors—are the inventors of new themes in SF. And it is the writers—not the

popular press or television—who think up the new ideas, for all that they may be building on current news stories. The thing that makes an idea real SF is that it is two steps AHEAD of mundane publications, and at least a step ahead of most other, already-published SF.

Things which do not work are easier to list than things that do; here are some we see all too often:

Puns that have been around for decades in non-SF settings—like un-stoned terns, immoral porpoises, and obscene clones falling down. Stories that depend on "surprising" the reader with something unfairly withheld by the author until the last line—for example, that the protagonists are giant lobsters, or are minute insects, or are just being born, or are the cast of characters of the Book of Genesis. Sermons about trendy—and transient—problems, like last summer's gasoline crisis, or this summer's fruit flies, even when superficially disguised as stories. [Don't forget the Video-Game-Is-Real! plotline which we see scads of. SM]

H.G. Wells was writing about genetic engineering 85 years ago, to pick on one of Miss Carmichael's suggestions. Clearly, if YOU can pick a subject that far in advance—AND present it against a believable setting, with a cast of characters who are made as real to the readers as their own wives and husbands—AND put them all together into a conflict of wills that force those characters to resolve their problems in a way that will SHOW the readers how that subject will affect people, THEN your SF will be fresh and new and readable for 85 years or more, as is the best of Wells's. And if you only come close, it'll be better than most SF that's written, and as good as a lot that sees print.

—George H. Scithers

NEXT ISSUE

The February 15, 1982 issue of Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine will be a truly remarkable one. For one thing, it will carry the first new fiction from Isaac Asimov to appear in our pages since the May 1980 issue. The story is "Lest We Remember," and you won't forget it. Also in the issue is work by Gregory Benford, Connie Willis, Robert Silverberg, and many more. On sale January 19, 1982.

INDEX

This index covers volume 5 of *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*, January 1981—December 21, 1981. Entries are arranged alphabetically by author. When there is more than one entry for an author, listings are arranged chronologically in order of appearance in the magazine. All entries without a parenthetical note after them are stories. These notes are: (p) poem; (a) article; (r) review; and (l) limerick. Collaborations are listed under both authors, with cross references. When the author's name or title is omitted, it is the same as that of the previous story.

Classified MARKET PLACE

ISAAC ASIMOV—is published 13 times a year. The rate for CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS is $1.10 per word, payable in advance—minimum ad $16.50. Capitalized words 40¢ per word additional. To be included in the next issue, please send order and remittance to R. S. Wayner, Classified Ad Director, DAVIS PUBLICATIONS, INC., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

ADDITIONAL INCOME

"EARN $1,000'S" Selling "How-To" books, manuals, directories. Illustrated Catalog $1.00 (refundable). Grahamco, DPBX 99371, Tacoma, WA 98499-0371.

AGENTS WANTED

DMSO $9.50 4 oz Bottle Delivered. Dealerships available. Unbelievable profit mover. Solvent, Box 1461, LaGrange Pk., IL 60525.

AUTHOR'S SERVICE

WRITERS: Quality critiques, reasonable rates. Details: SASE, D&D Critiques, Box 15877, Orlando, FL 32858.

AUTOMOBILES & MIDGET CARS

"SECRET 200 MPG Carburetor Revealed!!!" Free Details! MPG-DPC 182, Box 2133, Sandusky, Ohio 44870.

AVIATION

ANTI-GRAVITY No moving parts, magnets, gases or exotic fuels. Solid-State electronic levitation. Build flying models. Data, Schematics, Diagrams. 105 pages, 8x10 mimeo $20 ppd. GUARANTEED! Visa/MC add $5; Foreign add $10. SAUCER TECHNOLOGY, Box 132-R, Eureka Springs, Arkansas 72632.

BLUEPRINTS, PATTERNS & PLANS

CRAFT PRINT CATALOG—Choose from over 100 great easy-to-build plans. Send $1.50 (completely refunded with your first order). BOAT BUILDER, (CP Div.)—380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10037.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW—Eleven-times Hugo Award winner—features news, cartoons and controversy. Interviews, articles, letters and reviews by sf authors. Sample $1. P.O. Box 11408, Portland, OR 97211.

SF COLLECTOR. An advertising newspaper featuring articles, bibliographies, interviews, news, reviews, forthcoming books, etc. Free sample! Box D-86, Neche, ND 58265.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS—Cont'd

WORLDWIDE MAIL ORDER. Our quarterly catalogues update our virtually complete stock of SF and Fantasy hardcovers and paperbacks. Catalogue listing free US/Canada: $1.00 all other. THE SCIENCE FICTION SHOP, 56 EIGHTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10014.

ANALOG, Astounding, Asimov, Galaxy, Weird Tales, Etc. Back issues, affordable prices. Collections also purchased. Ray Bowman, Box 5845, Toledo, Ohio 43613.

PUBLISH YOUR BOOK! Join our successful authors. Publicity, advertising, beautiful books. All subjects invited. Send for fact-filled booklet and free manuscript report. Carlton Press, Dept. SMA, 84 Fifth Avenue, New York 10011.

"MYSTERY STORIES FOR WINNING HAPPINESS." Solve Problems! Send $1. NEWLIFE, Box 275, Boulder City, Nevada 89005.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

STAY HOME! EARN BIG MONEY addressing envelopes. Genuine offer 10¢. Lindco, 3636-DA Peterson, Chicago 60659.

FREE BOOK "2042 Unique Proven Enterprises." Fabulous "unknowns," second inflation income. Haylings-E12, Carlsbad, CA 92008.

DISTRIBUTORS. Immediate Cash Profits! Revolutionary Automotive Bargain. Free Details. Motaloy, Box 4457D9, Downey, CA 90241.

1000% Profit Bronzing or Chinakoting Baby Shoes. Free Literature. NBSDG, 398 Sebring Airport, Sebring, FL 33870.

EARN $2000 per month offering leases and loans to physicians and dentists. Details free. Write: Professional Capital, Dept. IA, 10880 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90024.

DMSO Distributors needed for NORDIC LABORATORY. Details: Solvent Supply, P.O. Box 23603, Fort Lauderdale, Florida or (305) 974-6315.

Classified Continued

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

"CIRCULAR MAILERS needed!" "Work from home." Earn hundreds $$$ weekly! No experience needed. Rexson 32-01E, Box 1060, Orange Park, FL 32073.

$20.000-$100,000 YEARLY. Start your own JANITORIAL business. Write: CleanPro, P.O. Box 17080-IASF, Portland, OR 97217.

NEED MONEY? Process Mail! Free Supplies, Postage! Information? Rush stamped envelope! Foodmaster-DC3, Burnt Hills, NY 12027.

$15,000 Weekly! No scheme. No chain letter. S. W. 2148 Lawrence Dr., Benton Harbor, MI 49022.

NEW Multi-Level Sales Organization seeking distributors. Ground floor opportunity. FREE information—Forstner, Dept. 7, P.O. Box 416, Baldwin, Michigan 49304.

BUSINESS Opportunities for the home. Write: Rt. 2, Box 232A, Wynne, AR 72396.

FREE BOOKLET INFLATION BEATER. WORK HOME. 1001 SECRETS REVEALED. KEYSTONE PUBLICATIONS, P.O. 39A, OLDBRIDGE, N.J. 08857.

75% COMMISSIONS! Plus additional lifetime commissions (mailorder opportunity)! Stamp Appreciated. Wheeler, 1501 Clairmint Rd. #923I, Decatur, GA 30033.

IT'S Easy, Fast, Simple. Learn the secrets of the wealthy in HOW TO BE FINANCIALLY SECURE. Send $7.95 to: American Press, P.O. Box 1082, Piscataway, N.J. 08854. Guaranteed or return in 30 days for a full refund.

$850.00/THOUSAND SECURING STUFFING ENVELOPES! GUARANTEED PROGRAM. Send stamped envelope: Nationwide, Box 5896, Columbia, SC 29250.

REAL ESTATE can make you a fortune! Let me show you how. Free Information. VICTORY, Dept. 598, New York, NY 10013.

EDUCATION & INSTRUCTION

UNIVERSITY DEGREES BY MAIL! Bachelors, Masters, Ph.D.s . . . Free revealing details. Counseling, Box 389-IA-1, Tustin, CA CA 92680.

UNIVERSITY DEGREES by mail. Legitimate, prestigious, inexpensive, fast. Free details. Dr. John Bear, 9301-CN, North Highway One, Mendocino, California 95460.

FOR SALE—MISCELLANEOUS

GOLD Coin: $50. Silver Necklace: $25. Silver Bar: $10. All: $75. Nation, DP, Fairfield, IL 62837.

FOR THE HOME

ELIMINATE ALL WORRIES involving UPKEEP and MAINTENANCE of YOUR HOME. Our GUIDE for the HOMEOWNER answers all questions. INVEST $18.00 a year for SIX NEWSLETTERS prepared by a BUILDER with 30 years experience. Profit from PERSONAL / PROFESSIONAL approach to PRESERVING and IMPROVING your home. Send $5.00 for sample copy. THE HOUSE DOCTOR, P.O. Box 2064, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

GIFTS THAT PLEASE

STATIONERY, GAMES and PHOTOPRINTS. SF and Fantasy themes. 50¢ for flyer and samples. Apogee Books, Interstate Mall, Altamonte Springs, FL 32701.

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE, published monthly. Send $17.50 for 13 issues to Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, P.O. Box 1930, Marion, OH 43305.

GOVERNMENT SURPLUS

JEEPS, CARS FROM $35.00! – 700,000 ITEMS! – GOVERNMENT SURPLUS – MOST COMPREHENSIVE DIRECTORY AVAILABLE TELLS HOW, WHERE TO BUY – YOUR AREA – $3 – MONEYBACK GUARANTEE–"SURPLUS INFORMATION SERVICES," BOX 3070-E1, SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA 93105.

HOBBIES & COLLECTIONS

MILITARY medals, patches, insignia, etc. Buy, sell, trade. Catalog 50¢: Quincy, Box 7792-S, Tulsa, Okla 74105.

GREAT RADIO PROGRAMS – mystery, adventure, science-fiction. Free list cassettes. Rare Radio, Box 117, Sunland, CA 91040.

HYPNOTISM

FREE catalog. Hypnotism, self hypnosis, sleep learning, hypnotic tape cassettes. DLMH, Box 487, Anaheim, CA 92805.

IMPORT-EXPORT

MARKET 2500 Amazing New "Fast-Sellers" Without Risk. Free Brochures! Ballrightco, Box 91309-N1, Cleveland, Ohio 44101.

LOANS BY MAIL

BORROW $1,000-$5,000 secretly–"overnight." Anyone! Credit unimportant. Repay anytime. Incredibly low interest. No interviews, collateral, cosigners. Unique "Financier's Plan." Full information, $2 (refundable). Spectrum, 120 Wall St.-16, New York 10005.

Classified Continued

LOANS BY MAIL—Cont'd

GET cash grants–from Government. (Never repay.) Also, cash loans available. All ages eligible. Complete information, $2 (refundable). Surplus Funds-DG, 1629 K St., Washington, DC 20006.

BORROW $25,000 'OVERNIGHT.' Any purpose. Keep indefinitely! Free Report! Success Research, Box 29070-SM, Indianapolis, IN 46229.

THE ARABS HAVE MILLIONS TO LOAN. INVEST! $25,000–$10,000,000 Possible! FREE DETAILS! Arab-DC, 935 Main, Vidor, TX 77632.

BORROW by mail! Signature loans. No collateral! Free Details! Write MGB-DPC182, Box 2298, Sandusky, OH 44870.

$LOANS$ on signature for any amount & purpose! Elite, Box 454-DG, Lynbrook, NY 11563.

QUICK MAILOANS! FREE APPLICATION FORM AND COMPLETE DETAILS RUSHED IMMEDIATELY! Lenco, Box 724-W1, McMinnville, Oregon 97128.

BORROW $30,000 without interest! All eligible. Repay anytime. Free details. Infohouse, Box 1004-IS1, New York, NY 10003.

MAGIC TRICKS, JOKER NOVELTIES & PUZZLES

HOW is it done? Secrets revealed. Giant catalog, $2.00 trick, both $1.00. Ab acadabra-MSF, Scotch Plains, New Jersey 07076.

MEMORY IMPROVEMENT

INSTANT MEMORY . . . NEW WAY TO REMEMBER. No memorization. Release your PHOTOGRAPHIC memory. Stop forgetting! FREE information. Institute of Advanced Thinking, 845DP ViaLapaz, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272.

MISCELLANEOUS

TECHNICAL SECRETS–Electronic Surveillance, Lock-Picking, etc. Free brochures: Mentor-DP, 135-53 No. Blvd., Flushing, NY 11354.

SAVE! Fabulous Gems For Jewelry, Collecting! Gemcutter to You! Details Free. Taylor's, 113-A Martin, Indian Harbor Beach, FL 32937.

DIAMOND Whetstones. From pocket size for fishermen and hunters to large for butchers. Send $1 (refunded with purchase) and long SASE for information. Busy Bee, Box 929-IO-1, Winston, OR 97496.

MISCELLANEOUS—Cont'd

SAVE GAS: 101 Ways to cut your gasoline costs. No gadgets, no additives. Box 20263, Seattle, WA 98102.

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

$300 WEEKLY SPARE TIME – Mailing Salesletters. Details: Delta: Dept.-D, Box 2902-CRS, Rock Hill, SC 29730.

MAKE YOUR CLASSIFIED AD PAY. Get "How to Write A Classified Ad That Pulls." Includes certificate worth $2.00 towards a classified ad. Send $1.75 (includes postage) to R. S. Wayner, Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

$60.00/Hundred stuffing envelopes!! Offer-details RUSH stamped addressed envelope: IMPERIAL-P460, Box 17410, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33318.

CRIME PAYS! 150% Profit. Distribute Security Products. Free Catalog. Evergreen, Box 1320(DP), Lakegrove, OR 97034.

PLEASE Be sure to include your zip code when ordering merchandise from classified advertisements. You'll receive faster delivery.

$1500 WEEKLY POSSIBLE STUFFING ENVELOPES! GUARANTEED PROGRAM. Send stamped envelope: Financial, Box 34474, Louisville, KY 40232.

BECOME A MILLIONAIRE! It's easy! Find out how! Send $5.00 to: S. Lombardo, P.O. Box 272, New Brunswick, NJ 08903.

"CIRCULAR MAILERS needed!" "Work from home." Earn hundreds $$$ weekly! No experience needed. Rexson 32-02E, Box 1060, Orange Park, FL 32073.

WORK AT HOME! Be flooded with offers! Offer details rush stamped addressed envelope: NSI, Dept. M-3, Box 16180, Ft. Ld., FL 33318.

MAKE OVER $22.50 an hour. Spare time at home! Rubber Stamp industry needs small manufacturers. We furnish all equipment and know-how! Particulars free! Write: Roberts, Room RC-466-LA, 1512 Jarvis, Chicago, IL 60625-1997.

WORK AT HOME!! Be flooded with offers! Offer-Details rush stamped addressed envelope to Harold E. DeFoor, Dept. MA-1, P.O. Box 1024, Kingsville, TX 78363.

MOTION PICTURE PROJECTORS. FILMS. SLIDES AND SUPPLIES

BREATHTAKING GLAMOUR SLIDES, CLASSIC NUDES. Catalog, six samples, $3.00. Photographic Place, Box 806-IA, Royal Oak, MI 48068.

Classified Continued

PERSONAL

UNIVERSITY DEGREES BY MAIL! Bachelors, Masters, Ph.D.s . . . Free revealing details. Counseling, Box 389-DP1, Tustin, CA 92680.

BECOME A Legally Ordained Minister. Free Details. ULC-DPM182, Box 2133, Sanlusky, OH 44870.

NEW-AGE SINGLES—discover Contact High! National magazine for independent singles. Details: Box 500-IA Mendocino, CA 95460.

HAVE CONFIDENTIAL CHICAGO MAILING ADDRESS or branch office. Business, Personal; Since 1944! Mail Center, 323 (g) Franklin, Chicago 60606.

SINGLE? WIDOWED? DIVORCED? Nationwide introductions! Hundreds of members! Identity, Box 315-DC, Royal Oak, MI 48068.

DO YOU KNOW "How to Write a Classified Ad That Pulls?" Instructive booklet tells how. Also includes certificate worth $2.00 towards a classified ad in any of our publications. For your copy send $1.75 (includes postage) to R. S. Wayner, Davis Publications, Inc., Dept. CL, 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

ORIENTALS. Malaysians, Indonesians, Thais, Filipinas need boyfriends, Husbands. Photos! Golden Heart, Box 2423, Yakima, WA 98901.

BECOME A Legally Ordained Minister. Free Details. ULC-DPM182, Box 2133, Sandusky, OH 44870.

VISA CREDIT CARDS issued quickly without investigation. Free details. Stapland, 625 Post #374, San Francisco, California 94109.

SINGLE? Meet that special person—anywhere! DATELINE, 316 Fifth Ave., New York 10001, (212) 889-3230 (213) 854-0640.

PERSONAL—Cont'd

LOVELY, sincere, oriental ladies want correspondence, friendship, marriage. Filam, P.O. Box A3713, Chicago, IL 60690 U.S.A.

PHOTOGRAPHY—PHOTOFINISHING

35mm slide samples. Art, science, geology, travel. SASE: Slides, 17 Leisure Drive, Kirksville, Missouri 63501.

SAVE HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS!!!! Make your own S & M Densitometer. Send $5.00 for detailed drawings and instructions. Order direct: S & M Instruments, Dept. IA1, 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

RADIO & TELEVISION

CABLE TV DESCRAMBLERS and CONVERTERS. PLANS and PARTS. Build or Buy. For information send $2.00. C&D Electronics, P.O. Box 21, Jenison, MI 49428.

RECORDS, TAPES & SOUND EQUIPMENT

FREE Promotional albums, concert tickets, stereos, etc. Information: Barry Publications, 477 82nd Street, Brooklyn, NY 11209.

SONGWRITERS

POEMS WANTED. Songs recorded and published. Radio-TV promotions. Broadway Music Productions, Box 7438-DA, Sarasota, FL 33578.

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL BOOKSTORE

MOONSTONE BOOKCELLARS, INC., 2145 Penn. Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20037. WASHINGTON'S only science and mystery specialty bookshop. 202-659-2600. Open seven days 11AM-6PM.

TOYS, GAMES & ENTERTAINMENT

EXPANDING EMPIRES. A strategic play-by-mail game of stellar conquest. For rules send $1 to Genius Club Productions, Dept. D, 8527 N. 31st Drive, Phoenix, Arizona 85021.

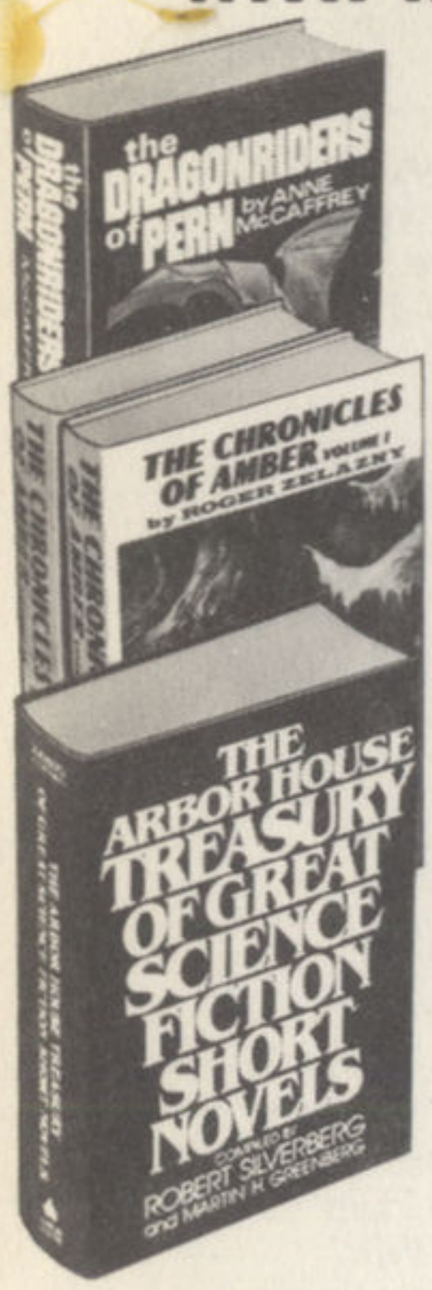
PLACE YOUR AD IN ONE OF OUR FICTION COMBINATIONS:
Mystery, Sci-Fi, or Special

OR TRY ONE OF OUR OTHER COMBINATIONS:
Combo #1, Combo #2, or Combo #3.

Each combination offers you a Special Discount Rate.
For further information write to R. S. Wayner, Classified Ad Director, Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

Why not? Take 5 for $1 now

WITH MEMBERSHIP IN THE SCIENCE FICTION BOOK CLUB



0075 **The Chronicles of Amber.** By Roger Zelazny. **Nine Princes in Amber; The Guns of Avalon; Sign of the Unicorn; The Hand of Oberon; The Courts of Chaos.** 2 vols. Comb. pub. ed. $32.30

2543 **The Dragonriders of Pern.** By Anne McCaffrey. Includes: **Dragonflight; Dragonquest; The White Dragon.** Comb. pub. ed. $26.85

1750 **God Emperor of Dune.** By Frank Herbert. The riveting fourth book in the tremendously popular Dune series. Pub. ed. $12.95

9076 **The Arbor House Treasury of Great Science Fiction Short Novels.** Robert Silverberg and Martin H. Greenberg, eds. 15 classics. Pub. ed. $19.95

7195 **The World of Tiers.** By Philip José Farmer. **The Maker of Universes; The Gates of Creation; A Private Cosmos; Behind the Walls of Terra; The Lavalite World.** 2 vols. Spec. ed.

*0844 **Shatterday.** By Harlan Ellison. 16 stories by one of today's best speculative fiction writers, including the multi-award-winning "Jeffty is Five." Pub. ed. $12.95

0299 **The Silver Metal Lover.** By Tanith Lee. A young girl falls in love with an almost-human robot in a world of the future. Spec. ed.

*9753 **The 1981 Annual World's Best SF.** Donald A. Wollheim, ed. Ten of the year's finest stories, collected by one of SF's most distinguished editors. Spec. ed.

8532 **The Hugo Winners, Vols. I and II.** Isaac Asimov, ed. 23 award-winning stories, 1955 to 1970. Pub. ed. $15.45

6221 **The Foundation Trilogy.** By Isaac Asimov. The ends of the galaxy revert to barbarism. An SF classic. Comb. pub. ed. $22.85

9969 **Tomorrow's Heritage.** By Juanita Coulson. What happens when Earth first contacts an alien intelligence? Spec. ed.

9605 **King David's Spaceship.** By Jerry Pournelle. A planet's only chance for independence is to gain forbidden knowledge. Pub. ed. $11.95

9944 **The Minervan Experiment.** By James P. Hogan. Includes: **Inherit the Stars; The Gentle Giants of Ganymede; Giants' Star.** Spec. ed.

9829 **Project Pope.** By Clifford D. Simak. What is the mysterious project that has begun on the world called "End of Nothing"? Pub. ed. $10.95

6197 **Riddle of Stars.** By Patricia A. McKillip. Includes: **The Riddle-Master of Hed; Heir of Sea and Fire; Harpist in the Wind.** Comb. pub. ed. $24.85

8730 **To The Stars.** By Harry Harrison. Includes: **Homeworld; Wheelworld; Starworld.** Spec. ed.

9977 **Windhaven.** By George R.R. Martin & Lisa Tuttle. One woman challenges a future society for the right to fly. Pub. ed. $13.95

*6510 **Wizard.** By John Varley. An exciting sequel to the best-selling **Titan,** with four humans pitted against a planet-sized sentient being. Pub. ed. $12.95

***Explicit scenes and language may be offensive to some.**
Note: Prices shown are publishers' edition prices.

An Extraordinary Offer! Browse through the list of books on this page and choose any 5 for just $1 (plus shipping and handling) with membership. It's the most extraordinary sample of science fiction ever offered in one package.

Cut along line and mail—no postage necessary!

How the Science Fiction Book Club works:

When your application for membership is accepted, you'll receive your introductory package of 5 books for just $1, plus shipping and handling. You may examine them in your home and, if not completely satisfied, return them within 10 days—membership will be cancelled and you'll owe nothing.

About every 4 weeks (14 times a year), we'll send you the Club's bulletin, *Things to Come,* describing the 2 coming Selections and a variety of Alternate choices. In addition, up to 4 times a year you may receive offers of special Selections, always at low Club prices. If you want the 2 Selections, you need do nothing; they'll be shipped to you automatically.

If you don't want a Selection, prefer an Alternate, or no book at all, just fill out the convenient form always provided, and return it to us by the date specified.

We allow you at least 10 days for making your decision. If you do not receive the form in time to respond within 10 days and receive an unwanted Selection, you may return it at our expense.

As a member you need take only 4 Selections or Alternates during the coming year. You may resign any time thereafter or continue to enjoy Club benefits for as long as you wish. One of the 2 Selections each month is only $2.98. Other Selections are slightly higher, but always much less than hardcover publishers' editions. A shipping and handling charge is added to all shipments. Send no money now. Cut off this postage-paid reply card and mail today.

Yes, I want to join The Science Fiction Book Club.

Science Fiction Book Club

Dept. DR-065, Garden City, N.Y. 11530

Please accept me as a member. I agree to the membership plan as described. Send me the 5 books whose numbers I have indicated below and bill me just $1, plus shipping and handling. I agree to take 4 additional books at regular low Club prices in the coming year and may resign any time thereafter. SFBC offers serious works for mature readers.

Mr.
Ms. _____
(Please print)

Address _____ Apt. # _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

If under 18, parent must sign.

_____

The Science Fiction Book Club offers complete hardbound editions sometimes altered in size to fit special presses and save members even more. Members accepted in U.S.A. and Canada only. Offer slightly different in Canada.

94-S217

What if?

* What if you had to plan the survival of galactic civilization? (#6221– see other side)

* What if you were immortal? (#9076)

* What if you were a warrior and your mount a winged dragon? (#2543)

* What if God is a computer? (#8532)

* What if Earth were a Shadow of the real world? (#0075)

* What if? *Wh*
not—stimulat
your imaginat
with the worl
finest specu
tive fiction?

Why not?

Take 5 Science Fiction Best-sellers for $1 with membership

See other side for a complete selection

Cut along line and mail — no postage necessary!

NO POSTAGE NECESSARY IF MAILED IN THE UNITED STATES

BUSINESS REPLY CARD

FIRST CLASS PERMIT NO. 1 GARDEN CITY, N.Y.

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

Science Fiction Book Club

Garden City, N.Y. 11530