

BEYOND

FANTASY FICTION

EDITED BY H. L. GOLD

JULY 1953

35c

THEODORE
STURGEON

DAMON
KNIGHT

T. L.
SHERRED

JEROME
BIXBY

JOE E.
DEAN

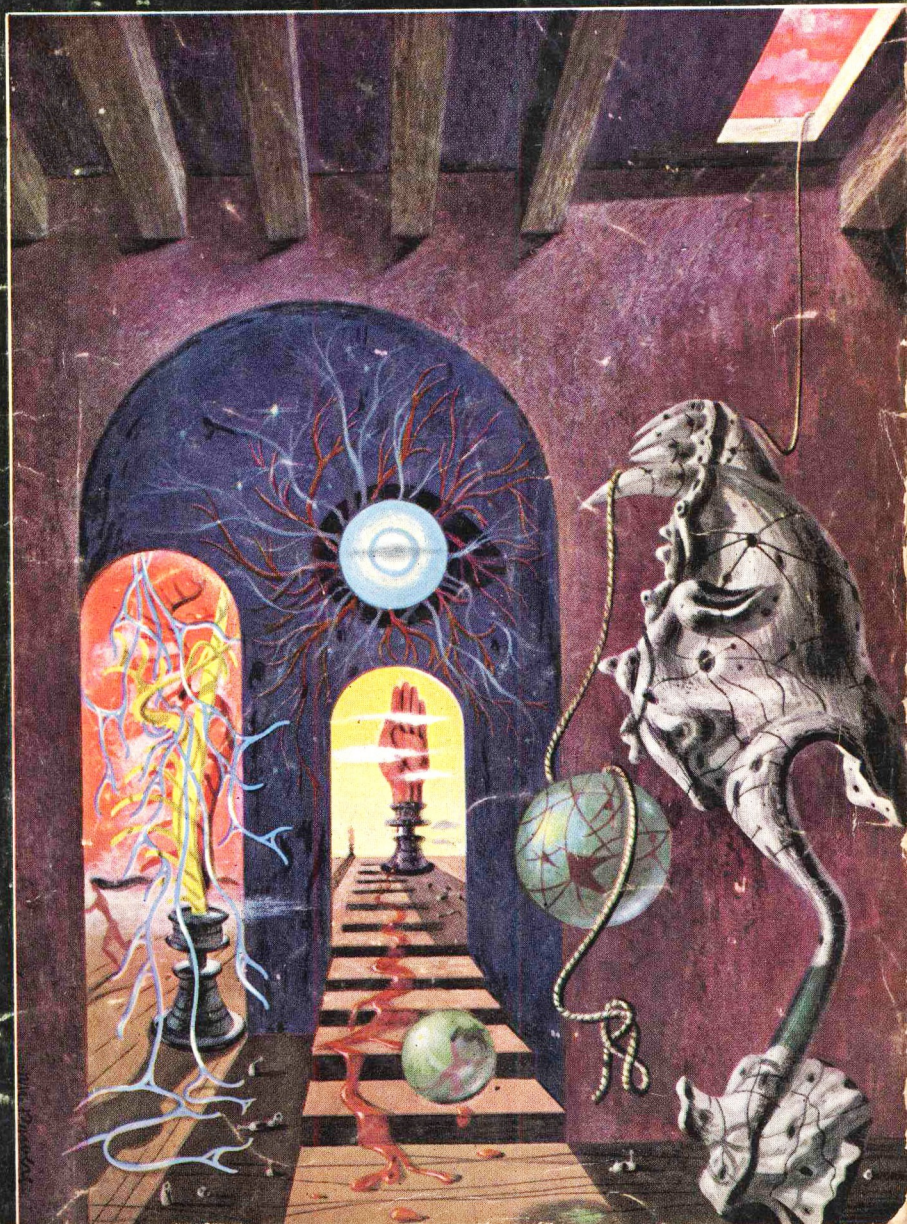
RICHARD
MATHESON

ROGER
DEE

FRANK M.
ROBINSON

JAMES
McCONNELL

ANC



BEYOND FANTASY FICTION

July, 1953 Vol. 1, No. 1

CONTENTS

NOVELLA

... AND MY FEAR IS GREAT 4 *by Theodore Sturgeon*

NOVELETS

BABEL II 92 *by Damon Knight*

EYE FOR INIQUITY 136 *by T. L. Sherred*

SHORT STORIES

ALL OF YOU 60 *by James McConnell*

THE DAY THE WORLD ENDED 69 *by Frank M. Robinson*

THE SPRINGBIRD 79 *by Roger Dee*

SHARE ALIKE 116 *by Jerome Bixby and Joe E. Dean*

THE WEDDING 128 *by Richard Matheson*

Cover by: RICHARD POWERS

ROBERT GUINN, Publisher

H. L. GOLD, Editor

W. I. VAN DER POEL, Art Director

EVELYN PAIGE, Assistant Editor

JOAN De MARIO, Production Manager

BEYOND Fantasy Fiction is published bi-monthly by Galaxy Publishing Corporation. Main offices: 421 Hudson Street, New York 14, N. Y. 35c per copy. Subscriptions: (6 copies) \$2.00 in the United States, Canada, Mexico, South and Central America and U. S. Possessions. Elsewhere \$2.50. Entry as second-class matter applied for at New York post office. Copyright 1953, by Galaxy Publishing Corporation. All rights, including translation, reserved. All material submitted must be accompanied by self-addressed stamped envelopes. The publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited material. All stories printed in this magazine are fiction, and any similarity between characters and actual persons is coincidental. Printed in the U. S. A. by the Guinn Co., Inc. Title Reg. appl'd for U. S. Pat. Off.

BEYOND

IN offering this bright new magazine to you, the publisher and staff of *GALAXY Science Fiction* make no attempt to conceal their proud smiles, for we believe that **BEYOND** will have the same impact on fantasy that *GALAXY* has had on science fiction.

What can you expect to find in **BEYOND**?

The unexpected, of course.

For **BEYOND** considers all things possible, from the alluring wistfulness of "Eye for Iniquity" to the terror-laden nightmare of "All of You," the alarmingly amusing "Babel II," the subtly intense beauty of "... And My Fear Is Great ..."

Does **BEYOND** really consider *everything* possible?

No, not really. It rules out two things:

—The probably possible.

—The unentertaining.

Naturally, that leaves the impossible . . . provided it makes a stimulating story.

From time to time, we're bound to err in separating the possible from the impossible; nobody is perfect. For example, naturalists had every reason not to believe in the legendary *Kraken*, a fabulous Norwegian squid so enormous that it could swamp a fishing boat . . . obviously just another fish story.

Well, the *Kraken* has been proved to exist, but that only shows how absurd reality can be.

It also demonstrates the realities that are greater than the five-sense reality we know, since:

—Fantasy is the oldest form of literature, dating back long before the invention of writing.

—The profound truths in fantasy have had to be discovered by every generation, only to be scoffed at and then rediscovered by the next.

Some time before World War II, I met a scholar who was being sent on an official mission to search ancient manuscripts for an influenza cure that was thought to have once been known and subsequently lost. I have no idea how he made out, but I'm sure he saw no merit in the molds used then—molds that we only recently have found again and named antibiotics.

—Only an incompetent psychotherapist would deny that all fantasies are psychic realities.

Well, then, is fantasy "escapist" literature, as critics love to tague it?

Certainly, but not in the superficial way they mean:

—Reality involves the acting out of unconscious fantasy.

—Fantasy is the unconscious interpretation of reality.

—Rejecting or repressing either one means serious psychological trouble.

—Facing only one or the other incessantly creates unbearable strain. We all need vacations from both.

Through the medium of dreams and impulses, we know fantasy well as the interpreter of reality. We rely less on nature myths than our ancestors did—but, as in the case of the *Kraken*, don't get the idea that science has all the answers, or that all nature myths are primitive nonsense.

When I was at Ilagan, 200 miles north of Manila, we had ghastly problems with a military bridge over the swiftest river I've ever seen. The Filipinos explained that the beautiful witch of the river caused our drownings and theirs—she took men as her husbands and released them, dead, seven days later. She could be seen, they said, tailing religious processions.

We watched one. The last woman in the parade had her face concealed. When we closed in, she ducked between several nipa huts. We searched the huts; they were empty and nobody was in sight between us and the murderous river.

Later, one of our men who'd been missing for seven days was found drowned only a mile from our bridge . . . although the river flowed at a turbulent ten miles an hour or more.

While I was in the Pacific, I kept wondering about one thing especially. The only time I'd held still for palmistry was in 1938, when the amateur who did it predicted that I'd get married, have a son, go to a Pacific isle without my family—and marry a native woman.

I did marry, have a son, go to a Pacific isle without my family. Watching the prediction come true point by point, I was resigned to the final clause. It never came even remotely close to happening. Was the reading wrong or was I? Some celestial accountant may be having trouble with his books.

No doubt there are scientific explanations for all our encounters with the occult.

But would they be as entertaining as the ones you'll find in BEYOND?

N. Z. Gold

...and my fear is great...

*As whose wouldn't be,
when the demon within
meets an even more frightful monster without!*

By THEODORE STURGEON

HE HEFTED one corner of the box high enough for him to get his knuckle on the buzzer, then let it sag. He stood waiting, wheezing. The door opened.

"Oh! You *didn't* carry it up five flights!"

"No, huh?" he grunted, and pushed inside. He set the groceries down on the sink top in the kitchenette and looked at her. She was sixty-something and could have walked upright under his armpit with her shoes on.

"That old elevator . . ." she said. "Wait. Here's something."

Illustrated by ASHMAN



...AND MY FEAR IS GREAT...

He wiped sweat out of his eyes and sensed her approach. He put out his hand for the coin but it wasn't a coin. It was a glass. He looked at it, mildly startled. He wished it were beer. He tasted it, then gulped it down. Lemonade.

"Slow-ly, slow-ly," she said, too late. "You'll get heat cramps. What's your name?" Her voice seemed to come from a distance. She seemed, in an odd way, to stand at a distance as well. She was small as a tower is small on the horizon.

"Don," he grunted.

"Well, Donny," she said, "sit down and rest."

He had said, "Don," not "Donny." When he was in rompers he was "Donny." He turned to the door. "I got to go."

"Wait a bit."

He stopped without turning.

"That's a beautiful watch for a boy like you."

"I like it."

"May I see it?"

BREATH whistled briefly in his nostrils. She had her fingers lightly on the heel of his hand before he could express any more annoyance than that.

Grudgingly, he raised his arm and let her look.

"Beautiful. Where did you get it?"

He looked at her, surlily. "In a store."

Blandly she asked, "Did you buy it?"

He snatched his hand away. He swiped nervously, twice, with a hooked index finger at his upper lip. His eyes were slits. "What's it to you?"

"Well, did you?"

"Look, lady. I brought your groceries and I got my lemonade. It's all right about the watch, see? Don't worry about the watch. I got to go now."

"You stole it."

"Whaddaya — crazy? I didn't steal no watch."

"You stole that one."

"I'm gettin' outa here." He reached for the knob.

"Not until you tell me about the watch."

He uttered a syllable and turned the knob. The door stayed closed. He twisted, pulled, pushed, twisted again. Then he whirled, his back thudding against the door. His gangly limbs seemed to compact. His elbows came out, his head down. His teeth bared like an animal's. "Hey, what is this?"

She stood, small and chunky and straight, and said in her far-away voice, "Are you going to tell me?" Her eyes were a milky blue, slightly protruding, and unreadable.

"You lemme out, hear?"

She shook her head.

"You better lemme out," he growled. He took two steps toward

her. "Open that door."

"You needn't be frightened. I won't hurt you."

"Somebuddy's goin' to get hurt," he said.

"Not—another—step," she said without raising her voice.

HE released an ugly bark of nervous laughter and took the other step. His feet came forward and upward and his back slammed down on the floor. For a moment he lay still, then his eyelids moved slowly, up and down and up again while for a moment he gave himself over to the purest astonishment. He moved his head forward so that he could see the woman. She had not moved.

He sat up, clenching his jaw against pain, and scuttled backward to the door. He helped himself rise with the doorpost, never taking his eyes off her. "Jesus, I slipped."

"Don't curse in this house," she said—just as mild, just as firm.

"I'll say what I damn please!"

Wham! His shoulders hit the floor again. His eyes were closed, his lips drawn back. He lifted one shoulder and arched his spine. One long agonized wheeze escaped through his teeth like an extrusion.

"You see, you didn't slip," said the woman. "Poor child. Let me help you."

She put her strong, small hand on his left biceps and another be-

tween his shoulder-blades. She would have led him to a chair but he pulled away.

"I'm awright," he said. He said it again, as if unconvinced, and, "What'd you . . . do?"

"Sit down," she said solicitously. He cowered where he was. "Sit down," she said again, no more sharply, but there was a difference.

He went to the chair. He sidled along the wall, watching her, and he did not go very fast, but he went. He sank down into it. It was a very low chair. His long legs doubled and his knees thrust up sharply. He looked like a squashed grasshopper. He panted.

"About the watch," she prompted him.

He panted twice as fast for three breaths and whimpered, "I don't want no trouble, lady, just lemme go, huh?"

She pointed at his wrist.

"Awright, you want the watch?"

Hysterically he stripped it off and dangled it toward her. "Okay? Take it." His eyes were round and frightened and wary. When she made no move he put the watch on her ancient gateleg table. He put his palms on the seat of the chair and his feet walked two paces doorward, though he did not rise, but swiveled around, keeping his face to her, eager, terrified.

"Where did you get it?"

He whimpered, wordless. He cast one quick, hungry look at the

door, tensed his muscles, met her gaze again, and slumped. "You gonna turn me in?"

"Of course not!" she said with more force than she had used so far.

"You're goin' to, all the same."

She simply shook her head, and waited.

HE turned, finally, picked up the watch, snapped the flexible gold band. "I swiped it—off Eckhart," he whispered.

"Who?"

"Eckhart on Summit Av-noo. He lives behind the store. It was just laying there, on the counter. I put a box of groceries on it and snagged it out from under. You gonna tell?"

"Well, Donny! Don't you feel better, now you've confessed?"

He looked up at her through his eyebrows, hesitated. "Yeah."

"Is that the truth, Donny?"

"Uh-huh." Then, meeting those calm, imponderable eyes, he said, "Well, no. I dunno, lady. I dunno. You got me all mixed up. Can I go now?"

"What about the watch?"

"I don't want it no more."

"I want you to take it back where you got it."

"What?" He recoiled, primarily because in shock he had raised his voice and the sound of it frightened him. "Je— shucks, lady, you want him to put me in the can?"

"My name is Miss Phoebe, not 'lady.' No, Donny, I think you'll do it. Just a moment."

She sat at a shaky escritoire and wrote for a moment, while he watched. Presently, "Here," she said. She handed him the sheet. He looked at her and then at the paper.

Dear Mr. Eckhart,
Inside the clasp of this watch your name and address is stamped.
Would you be good enough to see that it gets to its rightful owner?

Yours very truly,
(Miss) Phoebe Watkins

She took it out of his hand, folded it. She put the watch in an envelope, folded that neatly into a square, dropped it in a second envelope with the note, sealed it and handed it to Don.

"You—you're givin' it right back to me!"

"Am I?"

He lowered his eyes, pinched the top edge of the envelope, pulled it through his fingers to crease the top edge sharply. "I know. You're gonna phone him. You're gonna get me picked up."

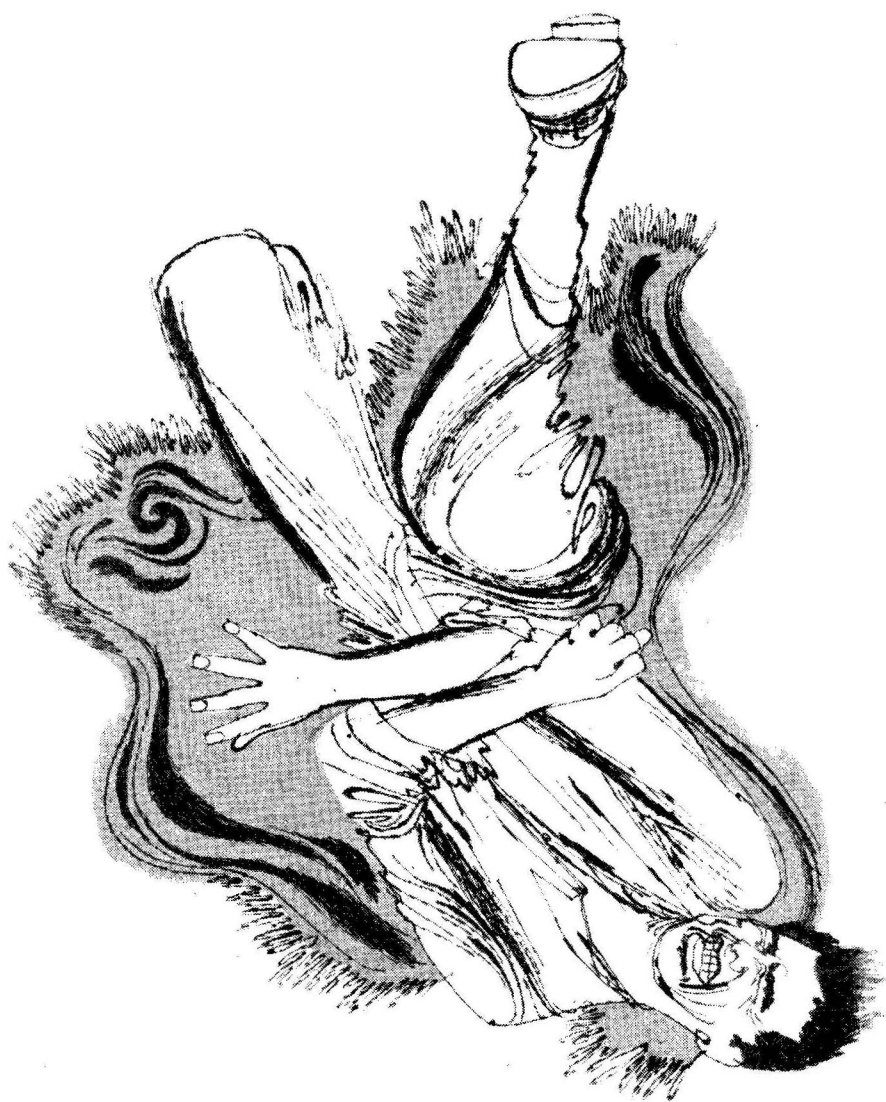
"You would be no good to me in the reformatory, Donny."

He looked quickly at her eyes, one, then the other. "I'm gonna be some good to you?"

"Tomorrow at four, I want you to come to tea," she said abruptly.

"To what?"

"To tea. That means wash your



...AND MY FEAR IS GREAT...

face and hands, put on a tie and don't be late."

WASH your face and hands. Nobody had dared to order him around like that for years. And yet, instead of resentment, something sharp and choking rose up in his throat. It was not anger. It was something which, when swallowed, made his eyes wet. He frowned and blinked hard.

"You'd better go," she said, before he could accept or refuse, "before the stores close." She didn't even say which stores.

He rose. He pulled his shoulder-blades together and his back cracked audibly. He winced, shambled to the door and stood waiting—not touching it, head down, patient—like a farm horse before a closed gate.

"What is it, Donny?"

"Ain'tcha gonna unlock it?"

"It was never locked."

For a long moment he stood frozen, his back to her, his eyes down. Then he put a slow hand to the knob, turned it. The door opened. He went out, almost but not quite pausing at the threshold, almost but not quite turning to look back. He closed the door quietly and was gone.

She put her groceries away.

HE DID not come at four o'clock.

He came at four minutes before

the hour, and he was breathing hard.

"Come in, Donny!" She held the door for him. He looked over his shoulder, down the corridor, at the elevator gates and the big window where feathery trees and the wide sky showed, and then he came into the room. He stood just inside, watching her as she moved to the kitchenette. He looked around the room, looking for policemen, perhaps, for bars on the windows.

There was nothing in the room but its old-not-antique furniture, the bow-legged occasional chair with the new upholstery which surely looked as old as it had before it was redone; there was the gateleg table, now bearing a silver tea-service with a bit of brass showing at the shoulder of the hot-water-pot, and a sugar-bowl with delicate tongs which did not match the rest of the set. There was the thin rug with its nap quite swept off, and the dustless books; there was the low chair where he had sat before with its tasseled antimacassars on back and arms.

"Make yourself at home," said her quiet voice, barely competing, but competing easily with the susurrus of steam that rose from the kettle.

He moved a little further in and stopped awkwardly. His Adam's apple loomed mightily over the straining button of his collar. His

tie was blue and red, and he wore a horrendous sport-jacket, much too small, with a violent yellow-and-gray tweed weave. His trousers were the color of baked earth, and had as much crease as his shoes had shine, and their soles had more polish than the uppers. But he'd scrubbed his face almost raw, and his hair was raked back so hard that his forehead gleamed like scoured porcelain.

When she faced him he stood his ground and said abruptly, before she could tell him to sit down, "I din' wanna come."

"Didn't you?"

"Well, I did, but I wasn' gonna."

"Why did you come, then?"

"I wuz scared not to."

She crossed the room with a large platter of little sandwiches. There were cheese and Spam and egg salad and liverwurst. They were not delicacies; they were food. She put it down next to a small store-bought chocolate cake and two bowls of olives, one ripe, one green, neither stuffed.

She said, "You had nothing to be afraid of."

"No, huh?" He wet his lips, took a deep breath. The rehearsed antagonism blurted out. "You done something to me yesterday I don't know what it was. How I know I ain't gonna drop dead if I don't show up or somep'n like that?"

"I did nothing to you, child!"

"Somebuddy sure as h— sure did."

"You did it to yourself."

"What?"

SHE looked at him. "Angry people don't live very long, Donny, did you know? But sometimes—" Her eyes fell to her hand on the table, and his followed. With one small age-mottled finger she traced around the table's edge, from the far side around one end. "—Sometimes it takes a long time to hurt them. But the hurt can come short and quickly, like *this!*" and she drew her finger straight across from side to side.

Don looked at the table as if something were written on it in a strange language. "Awright, but you made it do that."

"Come and sit down," she said.

But he hadn't finished. "I took the watch back."

"I knew you would."

"Well, okay then. Thass what I come to tell you. That's what you wanted me for, isn't it?"

"I asked you to *tea*. I didn't want to bully you and I didn't want to discuss that silly watch—that matter is closed. It was closed yesterday. Now *do* come and sit down."

"Oh," he said. "I get it. You mean sit down *or else*."

She fixed her eyes on his and looked at him without speaking and without any expression at all

until his gaze dropped. "Donny, go and open the door."

He backed away, felt behind him for the knob. He paused there, tense. When she nodded he opened it.

"You're free to go whenever you like. But before you do, I want you to understand that there are a lot of people I could have tea with. I haven't asked anyone but you. I haven't asked the grocery boy or the thief or any of the other people you seem to be sometimes. Just *you*."

He pulled the door to and stood yanking at his bony knuckles. "I don't know about none of that," he said confusedly. He glanced down between his ribs and his elbow at the doorknob. "I just din' want you to think you hadda put on no feedbag to fin' out did I take the watch back."

"I could have telephoned to Mr. Eckhart."

"Well, din't you?"

"Certainly not. There was no need. Was there?"

He came and sat down.

"Sugar?"

"Huh? Yeah—yeah."

"Lemon, or cream?"

"You mean I can have which-ever?"

"Of course."

"Then both."

"Both? I think perhaps the cream would curdle."

"In lemon ice cream it don't."

SHE gave him cream. He drank seven cups of tea; ate all the sandwiches and most of the cake. He ate quickly, not quite glancing over his shoulder to drive away enemies who might snatch the food. He ate with a hunger that was not of hours or days, but the hunger of years. Miss Phoebe patiently passed and refilled and stoked and served until he was done. He loosened his belt, spread out his long legs, wiped his mouth with one sleeve and his brow with the other, closed his eyes and sighed.

"Donny," she said when his jaws had stopped moving, "have you ever been to a bawdy house?"

The boy literally and immediately fell out of his chair. In this atmosphere of doilies and rectitude he could not have been more jolted by a batted ball on his mountainous Adam's apple. He floundered on the carpet, bumped the table, slopped her tea, and crawled back into his seat with his face flaming.

"No," he said, in a strangled voice.

She began then to talk to him quite calmly about social ills of many kinds. She laid out the grub and smut and greed and struggle of his own neighborhood streets as neatly and as competently as she had laid the tea-table.

She spoke without any particular emphasis of the bawdy house

she had personally closed up, after three reports to the police had no effect. (She had called the desk-sergeant, stated her name and intentions, and had asked to be met at the house in twenty minutes. When the police got there she had the girls lined up and two-thirds of their case-histories already written.) She spoke of playgrounds and civil defense, of pool-rooms, dope-pushers, candy-stores with beer-taps in the soda-fountains and the visiting nurse service.

DON listened, fairly humming with reaction. He had seen all the things she mentioned, good and bad. Some he had not understood, some he had not thought about, some he wouldn't dream of discussing in mixed company. He knew vaguely that things were better than they had been twenty, fifty, a hundred years ago, but he had never before been face to face with one of those who integrate, correlate, extrapolate this progress, who dirty their hands on this person or that in order to work for people.

Sometimes he bit the insides of his cheeks to keep from laughing at her bluntness and efficiency—he wished he could have seen that desk-sergeant's *face!*—or to keep from sniggering self-consciously at the way unmentionables rolled off her precise tongue. Sometimes he was puzzled and lost in the com-

plexities of the organizations with which she was so familiar. And sometimes he was slackjawed with fear for her, thinking of the retribution she must surely be in the way of, breaking up rackets like that. But then his own aching back would remind him that she had ways of taking care of herself, and a childlike awe would rise in him.

There was no direct instruction in anything she said. It was purely description. And yet, he began to feel that in this complex lay duties for him to perform. Exactly what they might be did not emerge. It was simply that he felt, as never before, a functioning part, rather than an excrescence, of his own environment.

He was never to remember all the details of that extraordinary communion, nor the one which immediately followed; for somehow she had stopped speaking and there was a long quiet between them. His mind was so busy with itself that there seemed no break in this milling and chewing of masses of previously unregarded ideas.

For a time she had been talking, for a time she did not talk, and in it all he was completely submerged. At length she said, "Donny, tell me something ugly."

"What do you mean ugly?" The question and its answer had flowed through him almost without contact; had she not insisted, he would

have lapsed into his busy silence.

"Donny, something that you know about that you've done. Anything at all. Something you've seen."

IT WAS easy to turn from introspection to deep recalls. "Went to one of those summer camps that there paper runs for kids. I was about seven, I guess."

"Donny," she said, after what may have been a long time, "go on."

"Wasps," he said, negotiating the divided sibilant with some difficulty. "The ones that make paper nests." Suddenly he turned quite pale. "They stung me, it was on the big porch. The nurse, she came out an' hugged me and went away and came back with a bottle, ammonia it was, and put it on where I was stung." He coughed. "Stuff stunk, but it felt fine. Then a counsellor, a big kid from up the street, he came with a long stick. There was a ol' rag tied on the end, it had kerosene on it. He lit it up with a match, it burned all yellow and smoky. He put it up high by them paper nests. The wasps, they come out howlin', they flew right into the fire. When they stopped comin' he pushed at the nest and down it come."

"He gone on to the next one, and down the line, twelve, fifteen of them. Every time he come to a new one the wasps they flew into

the fire. You could see the wings go, not like burning, not like melting, sort of *fzzz!* they gone. They fall. They fall all over the floor, they wiggle around, some run like ants, some with they legs burned off they just go around in one place like a phonograph.

"Kids come from all over, watching bugeyed, runnin' around the porch, stampin' on them wasps with their wings gone, they can't sting nobody. Stamp on 'em and squeal and run away an' run back and stamp some more. I'm back near the door, I'm bawlin'. The nurse is squeezin' me, watchin' the wasps, wipin' the ammonia on me any old place, she's not watchin' what she's doin'."

"An' all the time the fire goes an' goes, the wasps fly at it, never once a dumb damn wasp goes to see who's at the other end of the stick. An' I'm there with the nurse, bawlin'. *Why am I bawlin'?*" It came out a deep, basic demand.

"You must have been stung quite badly," said Miss Phoebe. She was leaning forward, her strange unlovely eyes fixed on him. Her lower lip was wet.

"Nah! Three times, four . . ." He struggled hard to fit rich sensation to a poverty of words. "It was me, see. I guess if I got stung every wasp done it should get killed. Maybe burned even. But them wasps in the nest-es, they didn't sting nobody, an' here they

are all . . . all *brave*, that's what, brave, comin' and fallin' and comin' and fallin' and gettin' squashed. Why? Fer *me*, thass why! Me, it was me, I hadda go an holler because I got stung an' make all that happen." He screwed his eyes tight shut and breathed as if he had been running. Abruptly his eyes opened very wide and he pressed himself upward in his chair, stretching his long bony neck as if he sat in rising water up to his chin. "What am I talkin' about, wasps? We wasn't talkin' about no wasps. How'd we get talkin' like this?"

She said, "It's all part of the same thing." She waited for him to quiet down. He seemed to, at last. "I asked you to tell me something ugly, and you did. Did it make you feel better?"

He looked at her strangely. *Wasn't there something—oh, yes. Yesterday, about the watch. She made him tell and then asked if he didn't feel better. Was she getting back to that damn watch? I guess not*, he thought, and for some reason felt very ashamed. "Yeah, I feel some better." He looked into himself, found that what he had just said was true, and started in surprise. "Why should that be?" he asked, and it was the first time in his whole life he had asked such a question.

"There's two of us carrying it now," she explained.

He thought, and then protested, "There was twenty people there."

"Not one of them knew why you were crying."

UNDERSTANDING flashed in him, bloomed almost to revelation. "God damn," he said softly.

This time she made no comment. Instead she said, "You learned something about bravery that day, didn't you?"

"Not until . . . now."

She shrugged. "That doesn't matter. As long as you understand, it doesn't matter how long it takes. Now, if all that happened just to make you understand something about bravery, it isn't an ugly thing at all, is it?"

He did not answer, but his very silence was a response.

"Perhaps one day you will fly into the fire and burn your wings and die, because it's all you can do to save something dear to you," she said softly. She let him think about that for a moment and then said, "Perhaps you will be a flame yourself, and see the brave ones fly at you and lose their wings and die. Either way, you'd know a little better what you were doing, because of the wasps, wouldn't you?"

He nodded.

"The playgrounds," she said, "the medicines, the air-raid watching, the boys' clubs, everything we were discussing . . . each single



one of them kills something to do its work, and sometimes what is killed is very brave. It isn't easy to know good from evil."

"You know," he blurted.

"Ah," she said, "but there's a reason for that. You'd better go now, Donny."

Everything she had said flew to him as she spoke it, rested lightly on him, soaked in while he waited, and in time found a response. This was no exception. When he understood what she had said he jumped up guiltily covering the thoughtful and receptive self with self-consciousness like a towel snatched up to cover nakedness.

"Yeah I got to, what time is it?" he muttered. "Well," he said, "yeah. I guess I should." He looked about him as if he had forgotten some indefinable thing, turned and gave her a vacillating smile and went to the door. He opened it and turned. Silently and with great difficulty his mouth moved. He pressed the lips together.

"Good-by, Donny."

"Yeah. Take it easy," he said.

As he spoke he saw himself in the full-length mirror fixed to the closet door. His eyes widened. It was himself he saw there—no doubt of that. But there was no sharp-cut, seam-strained sports jacket, no dull and tattered shoes, no slicked-down hair, smooth in front and down-pointing shag at the nape.

In the reflection, he was dressed in a dark suit. The coat matched the trousers. The tie was a solid color, maroon, and was held by a clasp so low down that it could barely be seen in the V of the jacket. The shoes gleamed, not like enamel but like the sheen of a new black-iron frying pan.

He gasped and blinked, and in that second the reflection told him only that he was what he was, flashy and clumsy and very much out of place here. He turned one long scared glance on Miss Phoebe and bolted through the door.

DON quit his job at the market. He quit jobs often, and usually needed no reason, but he had one this time. The idea of delivering another package to Miss Phoebe made him sweat, and the sweat was copious and cold. He did not know if it was fear or awe or shame, because he did not investigate the revulsion. He acknowledged it and acted upon it and otherwise locked the broad category labeled "Miss Phoebe" in the most guarded passages of his mind.

He was, unquestionably, haunted. Although he refused to acknowledge its source, he could not escape what can only be described as a sense of function. When he sharked around the pool-halls to pick up some change—he carried

ordinary seaman's papers, so could get a forty-cent bed at the Seaman's Institute—he was of the non-productive froth on the brackish edges of a backwater, and he knew it acutely.

When he worked as helper in a dockside shop, refurbishing outdated streetcars to be shipped to South America, his hand was unavoidably a link in a chain of vision and enterprise starting with an idea and ending with a peasant who, at this very moment, walked, but who would inevitably ride. Between that idea and that shambling peasant were months and miles and dollars, but the process passed through Don's hands every time they lifted a wrench, and he would watch them with mingled wonder and resentment.

He was a piece of nerve-tissue becoming aware of the proximity of a ganglion, and dimly conscious of the existence, somewhere, of a brain. His resentment stemmed from a nagging sense of loss. In ignorance he had possessed a kind of freedom—he'd have called it loneliness while he had it—which in retrospect filled him with nostalgia. He carried his inescapable sense of *belonging* like a bundle of thorns, light but most irritating. It was with him in drunkenness and the fights, the movies and the statistical shoutings of the baseball season. He never slept, but was among those who slept. He

could not laugh without the realization that he was among the laughers. He no longer moved in a static universe, or rested while the world went by, for his every action had too obvious a reaction. Unbidden, his mind made analogies to remind him of this invert-unwanted duality.

The street, he found, pressed upward to his feet with a force equal to his weight. A new job and he approached one another with an equal magnetism, and he lost it or claimed it not by his effort or lack of it, but by an intricate resultant compounded of all the forces working with him matched against those opposed.

On going to bed he would remove one shoe, and wake from a reverie ten minutes later to find with annoyance that he had sat motionless all that time to contemplate the weight of the shoe versus the upward force of the hand that held it. No birth is painless, and the stirrings of departure from a reactive existence are most troubling, since habit opposes it and there is no equipment to define the motivating ambition.

HIS own perceptions began to plague him. There had been a time when he was capable of tuning out that which did not concern him. But whatever it was that was growing within him extended its implacable sense of kinship to

more areas than those of human endeavor. *Why, he would ask himself insistently, is the wet end of a towel darker than the dry end? What do spiders do with their silk when they climb up a single strand? What makes the brows of so many big executives tilt downward from the center?*

He was not a reader, and though he liked to talk, his wharfrat survival instinct inhibited him from talking "different" talk, which is what his "different" questions would be, for one does not expose oneself to the sharp teeth of raillery.

He found an all-night cafe where the talk was as different as the talkers could make it; where girls who were unsure of their difference walked about with cropped hair and made their voices boom, and seedy little polyglots surreptitiously ate catsup and sugar with their single interminable cup of coffee; where a lost man could exchange his broken compass for a broken oar.

He went there night after night, sitting alone and listening, held by the fact that many of these minds were genuinely questing. Armed with his strange understanding of opposites, he readily recognized those on one side or the other of forces which most naturally oppose one another, but since he could admire neither phrasing nor intensity for their own sakes, he

could only wonder at the misery of these children perched so lonesomely on their dialectical seesaws, mourning the fact that they did not get off the ground while refusing to let anyone get on the other end.

Once he listened raptly to a man with a bleeding ear who seemed to understand the things he felt, but instead of believing many things, this man believed in nothing. Don went away, sad, wondering if there were anyone, anywhere who cared importantly that when you yawn, an Italian will ask you if you're hungry while a Swede will think you need sleep; or that only six parallel cuts on a half-loaf of bread will always get you seven slices.

So for many months he worked steadily so that his hands could drain off tensions and let him think. When he had worked through every combination and permutation of which he was capable, he could cast back and discover that all his thoughts had stemmed from Miss Phoebe. His awe and fear of her ceased to exist when he decided to go back, not to see her, but to get more material.

A MEASURE of awe returned, however, when he phoned. He heard her lift the receiver, but she did not say "Hello." She said, "Why, Don! How are you?"

He swallowed hard and said, "Good, Miss Phoebe."

"Four o'clock tomorrow," she said, and hung up.

He put the receiver back carefully and stood looking at the telephone. He worked the tip of the finger-stop under his thumbnail and stood for a long time in the booth, carefully cleaning away the thin parenthesis of oily grime which had defied his brush that morning. When it was gone, so was his fright, but it took a long time. *I've forgotten it all right*, he thought, *but oh, my aching back!*

Belatedly he thought, *Why, she called me Don, not Donny.*

He went back to the cafe that night, feeling a fine new sense of insulation. He had so much to look forward to that searches could wait. And like many a searcher before him, he found what he was looking for as soon as he stopped looking. It was a face that could not have drawn him more if it had been luminous, or leaf-green. It was a face with strong and definite lines, with good pads of laughter-muscles under the cheek-bones, and eye-sockets shaped to catch and hold laughter early and long. Her hair was long and seemed black, but its highlights were not blue but red. She sat with six other people around a large table, her eyes open and sleeping, her mouth lax and miserable.

He made no attempt to attract

her attention, or to join the group. He simply watched her until she left, which was some three or four hours later. He followed her and so did another man. When she turned up the steps of a brown-stone a few blocks away the man followed her, and was halfway up the steps when she was at the top, fumbling for a key. When Don stopped, looking up, the man saw him and whirled. He blocked Don's view of the girl. To Don he was not a person at all, but something in the way.

Don made an impatient, get-out-of-the-way gesture with his head, and only then realized that the man was at bay, terrified, caught red-handed. His eyes were round and he drooled. Don stood, looking upward, quite astonished, as the man sidled down, glaring, panting, and suddenly leaped past him and pelted off down the street.

DON looked from the shadowed, dwindling figure to the lighted doorway. The girl had both hands on the side of the outer, open doorway and was staring down at him with bright unbelief in her face. "Oh, dear God," she said.

Don saw that she was frightened, so he said, "It's all right." He stayed where he was.

She glanced down the street where the man had gone and found it empty. Slowly, she came toward Don and stopped on the

third step above him. "Are you an angel?" she asked. In her voice was a childlike eagerness and the shadow of the laughter that her face was made for.

Don made a small, abashed sound. "Me? Not me."

She looked down the street and shuddered. "I thought I didn't care any more *what* happened," she said, as if she were not speaking to him at all. Then she looked at him. "Anyway, thanks. Thanks. I don't know what he might've . . . if you . . ."

Don writhed under her clear, sincere eyes. "I didn't do nothing." He backed off a pace. "What do you mean, am I a angel?"

"Didn't you ever hear about a guardian angel?"

He had, but he couldn't find it in himself to pursue such a line of talk. He had never met anyone who talked like this. "Who was that guy?"

"He's crazy. They had him locked up for a long time, he hurt a little girl once. He gets like that once in a while."

"Well, you want to watch out," he said.

She nodded gravely. "I guess I care after all," she said. "I'll watch out."

"Well, take it easy," he said.

She looked quickly at his face. His words had far more dismissal in them than he had intended, and he suddenly felt miserable. She

turned and slowly climbed the steps. He began to move away because he could think of nothing else to do. He looked back over his shoulder and saw her in the doorway, facing him. He thought she was going to call out, and stopped. She went inside without speaking again, and he suddenly felt very foolish. He went home and thought about her all night and all the next day. He wondered what her name was.

WHEN he pressed the buzzer, Miss Phoebe did not come to the door immediately. He stood there wondering if he should buzz again or go away or what. Then the door opened. "Come in, Don."

He stepped inside, and though he thought he had forgotten about the strange mirror, he found himself looking for it even before he saw Miss Phoebe's face. It was still there, and in it he saw himself as before, with the dark suit, the quiet tie, the dull, clean-buffed shoes. He saw it with an odd sense of disappointment, for it had given him such a wondrous shock before, but now reflected only what a normal mirror would, since he was wearing such a suit and tie and shoes, but wait—the figure in the reflection carried something and he did not. A paper parcel . . . a wrapped bunch of flowers; not a florist's elaboration, but tissue-wrapped jonquils from a sub-

way peddler. He blinked, and the reflection was now quite accurate again.

All this took place in something over three seconds. He now became aware of a change in the room, *it's—oh, the light*. It had been almost glary with its jewel-clean windows and scrubbed white woodwork, but now it was filled with mellow orange light. Part of this was sunlight struggling through the inexpensive blinds, which were drawn all the way down. Part was something else he did not see until he stepped fully into the room and into the range of light from the near corner. He gasped and stared, and, furiously, he felt tears rush into his eyes so that the light wavered and ran.

"Happy birthday, Don," said Miss Phoebe severely.

Don said, "Aw." He blinked hard and looked at the little round cake with its eighteen five-and-dime candles. "Aw."

"Blow them out quickly," she said. "They run."

He bent over the cake.

"Everyone, mind," she said. "In one breath."

He blew. All the candles went out but one. He had no air left in his lungs, and he looked at the candle in purple panic. In a child-like way, he could not bring himself to break the rules she had set up. His mouth yawped open and closed like that of a beached fish.

He puffed his cheeks out by pushing his tongue up and forward, leaned very close to the candle, and released the air in his mouth with a tiny explosive pop. The candle went out.

"Splendid. Open the blinds for me like a good boy."

He did as he was asked without resentment. As she plucked the little sugar candle-holders out of the cake, he said, "How'd you know it was my birthday?"

"Here's the knife. You must cut it first, you know."

He came forward. "It's real pretty. I never had no birthday cake before."

"I'm glad you like it. Hurry now. The tea's just right."

He busied himself, serving and handing and receiving and setting down, moving chairs, taking sugar. He was too happy to speak.

"NOW then," she said when they were settled. "Tell me what you've been up to."

He assumed she knew, but if she wanted him to say, why, he would. "I'm a typewriter mechanic now," he said. "I like it fine. I work nights in big offices and nobody bothers me none. How've you been?"

She did not answer him directly, but her serene expression said that nothing bad could ever happen to her. "And is that all? Just work and sleep?"

"I been thinkin'," he said. He looked at her curiously. "I thought a lot about what you said." She did not respond. "I mean about everything working on everything else, an' the wasps and all." Again she was silent, but now there was response in it.

He said, "I was all mixed up for a long time. Part of the time I was mad. I mean, like you're working for a boss who won't let up on you, thinks he owns you just because you work there. Used to be I thought about whatever I wanted to, I could stop thinkin' like turnin' a light off."

"Very apt," she remarked. "It was exactly that."

He waited while this was absorbed. "After I was here I couldn't turn off the light; the switch was busted. The more I worked on things, the more mixed-up they got." In a moment he added, "For a while."

"What things?" she asked.

"Hard to say," he answered honestly. "I never had nobody to tell me much, but I had some things pretty straight. It's wrong to swipe stuff. It's right to do what they tell you. It's right to go to church."

"It's right to worship," she interjected. "If you can worship in a church, that's the best place to do it. If you can worship better in another place, then that's where you should go instead."

"That's what I mean!" he barked, pointing a bony finger like a revolver. "You say something like that, so sure and easy, an' all the—the fences go down. Everything's all in the right box, see, an' you come along and shake everything together. You don't back off from nothing. You say what you want about anything, an' you let me say anything I want to you. Everything I ever thought was right or wrong could be wrong or right. Like those wasps dyin' because of me, and you say they maybe died *for* me, so's I could learn something. Like you sayin' I could be a wasp or a fire, an' still know what was what . . . I'll get mixed up again if I go on talkin' about it."

"I think not," she said, and he felt very pleased. She said, "It's in the nature of things to be 'shaken all together,' as you put it. A bird brings death to a worm and a wildcat brings death to the bird. Can we say that what struck the worm and the bird was evil, when the wildcat's kittens took so much good from it? Or if the murder of the worm is good, can we call the wildcat evil?"

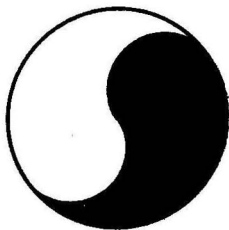
"There isn't no . . . no *altogether* good or bad, huh."

"Now, that is a very wrong thing to say," she said with soft-voiced asperity.

"You gone an' done it again!" he exclaimed.

SHE did not smile with him. "There is an absolute good and an absolute evil. They cannot be confused with right and wrong, or building and destroying as we know them, because, like the cat and the worm, those things depend on whose side you take. Don, I'm going to show you something very strange and wonderful."

She went to her little desk and got pencil and paper. She drew a circle, and within it she sketched in an S-shaped line. One side of this line she filled in with quick short strokes of her pencil:



"This," she said, as Don pored over it, "is the most ancient symbol known to man. It's called 'yin and Yang.' 'Yin' is the Chinese term for darkness and earth. 'Yang' means light and sky. Together they form the complete circle—the universe, the cosmos—everything. Nothing under heaven can be altogether one of these things or the other. The symbol means light and dark. It means birth and death. It is everything which holds together and draws down, with everything that pours

out and disperses. It is male and female, hope and history, love and hate. It's—everything there is or could be. It's why you can't say the murder of a worm by a bird is good or evil."

"This here yin an' Yang's in everything we do, huh."

"Yes."

"It's God an' the Devil then."

"*Good and evil.*" She placed her hand over the entire symbol. "God is all of it."

"Well, all right!" he exclaimed. "So it's like I said. There ain't a 'altogether good' and a 'altogether bad'. Miss Phoebe, how you know you're right when you bust up some pusher's business or close a joint?"

"There's a very good way of knowing, Don. I'm very glad you asked me that question." She all but beamed at him—she, who hardly ever even smiled. "Now listen carefully. I am going to tell you something which it took me many years to find out. I am going to tell you because I do not see why the young shouldn't use it.

"Good and evil are active forces—almost like living things. I said that nothing under heaven can be completely one of these things or the other, and it's true. But, Don—good and evil come to us from *somewhere*. They reach this cosmos as living forces, constantly replenished—from *somewhere*. It follows that there is a Source of

good and a Source of evil . . . or call them light and dark, or birth and death if you like."

SHE put her finger on the symbol. "Human beings, at least with their conscious wills, try to live here, in the Yang part. Many find themselves on the dark side, some cross and recross the borderline. Some set a course for themselves and drive it straight and true, and never understand that the border itself turns and twists and will have them in one side and then the other.

"In any case, these forces are in balance, and they must remain so. But as they are living, vital forces, there must be those who willingly and purposefully work with them."

With his thumbnail he flicked the paper. "From this, everything's so even-steven you'd never know who you're working for."

"Not true, Don. There are ways of knowing."

He opened his lips and closed them, turned away, shaking his head.

"You may ask me, Don," she said.

"Well, okay. You're one of 'em. Right?"

"Perhaps so."

"Perhaps *nothing*. You knocked me flat on my noggin twice in a row an' never touched me. You're—you're somethin' special, that's for sure. You even knew about my

birthday. You know who's callin' when the phone rings."

"There are advantages."

"All right then, here's what I'm gettin' to, and I don't want you to get mad at me. What I want to know is, why ain't you rich?"

"What do you mean by *rich*?"

He kicked the table-leg gently. "Junk," he said. He waved at the windows. "Everybody's got venetian blinds now. Look there, cracks in the ceiling 'n you'll get a rent rise if you complain, long as it ain't leakin'. You know, if I could do the things you do, I'd have me a big house an' a car. I'd have flunkies to wash dishes an' all like that."

"I wouldn't be rich if I had all those things, Don."

HE looked at her guardedly. He knew she was capable of a preachment, though he had been lucky so far. "Miss Phoebe," he said respectfully, "You ain't goin' to tell me the—uh—inner riches is better'n a fishtail Cadillac."

"I'll ask *you*," she said patiently. "Would you want a big house and servants and all those things?"

"Well, *sure*!"

"Why?"

"Why? Well, because, because—well, that's the way to live, that's all."

"Why is it the way to live?"

"Well, anyone can see why."

"Don, answer the question! Why

is that the way to live?"

"Well," he said. He made a circular gesture and put his hand down limply. He wet his lips. "Well, because you'd have what you wanted." He looked at her hopefully and realized he'd have to try again. "You could make anyone do what you wanted."

"Ah," she said. "Why would you want to do that?"

"So you wouldn't have to do your own work."

"Aside from personal comfort—why would you want to be able to tell other people what to do?"

"You tell me," he said with some warmth.

"The answers are in you if you'll only look, Don. Tell me: Why?"

He considered. "I guess it'd make me feel good."

"Feel good?"

"The boss. The Man. You know. I say jump, they jump."

"Power?"

"Yeah, that's it, power."

"Then you want riches so you'll have a sense of power."

"You're in."

"And you wonder why I don't want riches. Don, I've *got* power. Moreover, it was given me and it's mine. I needn't buy it for the rest of my life."

"Well, now . . ." he breathed.

"You can't imagine power in any other terms than cars and swimming pools, can you?"

"Yes I can," he said instantly.

Then he grinned and added, "But not yet."

"I think that's more true than you know," she said, giving him her sparse smile. "You'll come to understand it."

They sat in companionable silence. He picked up a crumb of cake icing and looked at it. "Real good cake," he murmured, and ate it. Almost without change of inflection, he said, "I got a real ugly one to tell you."

She waited, in the responsive silence he was coming to know so well.

"Met a girl last night."

HE was not looking at her and so did not see her eyes click open, round and moist. He hooked his heel in the chair rung and put his fist on the raised knee, thumb up. He lowered his head until the thumb fitted into the hollow at the bridge of his nose. Resting his head precariously there, rolling it slightly from time to time as if he perversely enjoyed the pressure and the ache, he began to speak. And if Miss Phoebe found surprising the leaps from power to birthday cake to a girl to what happened in the sewer, she said nothing.

"Big sewer outlet down under the docks at Twenty-seventh," he said. "Wuz about nine or ten, playing there. Kid called Renzo. We were inside the pipe; it was about

five feet high, and knee-deep in storm water. Saw somethin' bobbin' in the water, got close enough to look. It was the hind feet off a dead rat, a great big one, and *real* dead. Renzo, he was over by the outlet tryin' to see if he could get up on a towboat out there, and I thought it might be fine if I could throw the rat on his back on account he didn't have no shirt on. I took hold of the rat's feet and pulled, but that rat, he had his head stuck in a side-pipe somehow, an' I guess he swole some too. I guess I said something and Renzo he come over, so there was nothin' for it then but haul the rat out anyway. I got a good hold and yanked, an' something popped an' up he came. I pulled 'im right out of his skin. There he was wet an' red an' bare an' smellin' a good deal. Renzo, he lets out a big holler, laughin', I can still hear it in that echoey pipe. I'm standin' there like a goofball, starin' at this rat. Renzo says, 'Hit'm quick, Doc, or he'll never start breathin'!' I just barely got the idea when the legs come off the rat an' it fell in the water with me still holdin' the feet."

It was very quiet for a while. Don rocked his head, digging his thumb into the bridge of his nose. "Renzo and me we had a big fight after. He tol' everybody I had a baby in the sewer. He tol' 'em I's a firstclass stork. They all started to

call me Stork, I hadda fight five of 'em in two days before they cut it out.

"Kid stuff," he said suddenly, too loudly, and sat upright, wide-eyed, startled at the sound. "I know it was kid stuff, I can forget it. But it won't . . . it won't forget."

MISS Phoebe stirred, but said nothing.

Don said, "Girls. I never had nothing much to do with girls, kidded 'em some if there was somebody with me started it, and like that. Never by myself. I tell you how it is, it's—" He was quiet for a long moment. His lips moved as if he were speaking silently, words after words until he found the words he wanted. He went on in precisely the same tone, like an interrupted tape recorder.

"—Like this, I get so I like a girl a whole lot, I want to get close to her, I think about her like any fellow does. So before I can think much about it, let alone *do* anything, zing! I'm standin' in that stinkin' sewer, Renzo's yellin' 'Hit'm quick, Doc,' an' all the rest of it." He blew sharply from his nostrils. "The better a girl smells," he said hoarsely, "the worse it is. So I think about girls, I think about rats, I think about babies, it's Renzo and me and that echo. Laughin'," he mumbled, "him laughin'.

"I met a girl last night," he said clearly, "I don't want ever to think about like that. I walked away. I don't know what her name is. I want to see her some more. I'm afraid. So that's why."

After a while he said, "That's why I told you."

And later, "You were a big help before, the wasps." As he spoke he realized that there was no point in hurrying her; she had heard him the first time and would wait until she was ready. He picked up another piece of icing, crushed it, tossed the pieces back on the plate.

"You never asked me," said Miss Phoebe, "about the power I have, and how it came to me."

"Din't think you'd say. I wouldn't, if I had it. This girl was—"

"Study," said Miss Phoebe. "More of it than you realize. Training and discipline and, I suppose, a certain natural talent which," she said, fixing him sternly with her eyes as he was about to interrupt, "I am sure you also have. To a rather amazing degree. I have come a long way, a long hard way, and it isn't so many years ago that I first began to feel this power . . . I like to think of you with it, young and strong and . . . and good, growing greater, year by year. Don, would you like the power? Would you work hard and patiently for it?"

He was very quiet. Suddenly he looked up at her. "What?"

She said—and for once the control showed—"I thought you might want to answer a question like that."

He scratched his head and grinned. "Gee, I'm sorry, Miss Phoebe, but for that one second I was thinkin' about . . . something else, I guess. Now," he said brightly, "what was it you wanted to know?"

"What was this matter you found so captivating?" she asked heavily. "I must say I'm not used to talking to myself, Don."

"Ah, don't jump salty, Miss Phoebe," he said contritely. "I'll pay attention, honest. It's just that I—you don't say *one* word about what I told you. I guess I was tryin' to figure it out by myself if you wasn't goin' to help."

"Perhaps you didn't wait long enough."

"Oh." He looked at her and his eyes widened. "*Oh!* I never thought of that. Hey, go ahead, will you?" He drew his knees together and clasped them, turned to face her fully.

She nodded with a slightly injured satisfaction. "I asked you, Don, if you'd like the kind of power I have, for yourself."

"*Me?*" he demanded, incredulously.

"You. And I also asked you if you would work hard and patiently

to get it. Would you?"

"Would I! Look, you don't really think, I mean, I'm just a—"

"We'll see," she said.

SHE glanced out the window. Dusk was not far away. The curtains hung limp and straight in the still air. She rose and went to the windows, drew the blinds down. The severe velour drapes were on cranes. She swung them over the windows. They were not cut full enough to cover completely, each window admitted a four-inch slit of light. But that side of the building was in shadow, and she turned back to find Don blinking in deep obscurity. She went back to her chair.

"Come closer," she said. "No, not that way—facing me. That's it. Your back to the window. Now, I'm going to cover my face. That's because otherwise the light would be on it; I don't want you to look at me or at anything but what you find inside yourself." She took a dark silk scarf from the small drawer in the end of the gateleg table. "Put your hands out. Palms down. So." She dropped the scarf over her face and hair, and felt for his hands. She slipped hers under his, palms upward, and leaned forward until she could grasp his wrists. "Hold mine that way too. Good. Be absolutely quiet."

He was.

She said, "There's something the

matter. You're all tightened up. And you're not close enough. Don't move! I mean, in your mind . . . ah, I see. You'll have your questions answered. Just trust me." A moment later she said, "That's *much* better. There's something on your mind, though, a little something. Say it, whatever it is."

"I was thinkin', this is a trapeze grip, like in the circus."

"So it is! Well, it's a good contact. Now, don't think of anything at all. If you want to speak, well, do; but nothing will be accomplished until you no longer feel like talking.

"There is a school of discipline called Yoga," she said quietly. "For years I have studied and practiced it. It's a lifetime's work in itself, and still it's only the first part of what I've done. It has to do with the harmony of the body and the mind, and the complete control of both. My breathing will sound strange to you. Don't be frightened, it's perfectly all right."

His hands lay heavily in hers. He opened his eyes and looked at her but there was nothing to see, just the black mass of her silk-shrouded head and shoulders in the dim light. Her breathing deepened. As he became more and more aware of other silences, her breathing became more and more central in his attention. He began to wonder where she was putting it all; an inhalation couldn't possibly

continue for so long, like the distant hiss of escaping steam. And when it dwindled, the silence was almost too complete, for too long; no one could hold such a deep breath for as long as that! And when at last the breath began to come out again, it seemed as if the slow hiss went on longer even than the inhalation. If he had wondered where she was putting it, he now wondered where she was getting it.

And at last he realized that the breathing was not deep at all, but shallow in the extreme; it was just that the silence was deeper and her control greater than he had imagined. His hands—

"It tingles. Like electric," he said aloud.

HIS voice did not disturb her in the least. She made no answer in any area. The silence deepened, the darkness deepened, the tingling continued and grew . . . not grew; it spread. When he first felt it, it had lived in a spot on each wrist, where it contacted hers. Now it uncoiled, sending a thin line of sensation up into his forearms and down into his hands. He followed its growth, fascinated. Around the center of each palm the tingling drew a circle, and sent a fine twig of feeling growing into his fingers, and at the same time he could feel it negotiating the turn of his elbows.

He thought it had stopped growing, and then realized that it had simply checked its twig-like creeping, and was broadening; the line in his arms and fingers was becoming a band, a bar of feeling. It crossed his mind that if this bothered him at all he could pull his hands away and break the contact, and that if he did that Miss Phoebe would not resent it in any way. And, since he knew he was free to do it, knew it without question, he was not tempted. He sat quietly, wonder-struck, tasting the experience.

With a small silent explosion there were the tingling, hair-thin lines of sensation falling like distant fireworks through his chest and abdomen, infusing his loins and thighs and the calves of his legs. At the same time more of them crept upward through his neck and head, flared into and around his ears, settled and boiled and shimmered through his lobes and cheeks, curled and clasped the roots of his eyelids. And again there was the feeling of the lines broadening, fusing one with the other as they swelled. Distantly he recognized their ultimate; they would grow inward and outward until they were a complete thing, bounded exactly by everything he was, every hair, every contour, every thought and function.

He opened his eyes, and the growth was not affected. The dark

mass of Miss Phoebe's head was where it had been, friendly and near and reassuring. He half-smiled, and the sparkling delicate little lines of feeling on his lips yielded to the smile, played in it like infinitesimal dolphins, gave happy news of it to all the other threads, and they all sang to his half-smile and gave him joy. He closed his eyes comfortably, and cheerful filaments reached for one another between his upper and lower lashes.

AN uncountable time passed. Time now was like no time he knew of, drilling as it always had through event after event, predictable and dictatorial to rust, springtime, and the scissoring hands of clocks. This was a new thing, not a suspension, for it was too alive for that. It was different, that's all, different the way this feeling was, and now the lines and bands and bars were fused and grown, and he was filled . . . he was, himself, of a piece with what had once been the tingling of a spot on his wrist.

It was a feeling, still a feeling, but it was a substance too; Don-sized, Don-shaped. A color . . . no, it wasn't a color, but if it had been a color it was beginning to glow and change. It was glowing as steel glows in the soaking-pits, a color impossible to call black because it is red inside; and now you can



...AND MY FEAR IS GREAT...

see the red; and now the red has orange in it, and now in the orange is yellow, and when white shows in the yellow you may no longer look, but still the radiation beats through you, intensifying . . . not a color, no; this thing had no color and no light, but if it had been a color, this would have been its spectral growth.

And this was the structure, this the unnamable *something* which now found itself alive and joyous. It was from such a peak that the living thing rose as if from sleep, became conscious of its own balance and strength, and leaped heavenward with a single cry like all the satisfying, terminal resolving chords of all music, all uttered in a wingbeat of time.

Then it was over not because it was finished, like music or a meal, but because it was perfect—like foam or a flower caught in the infrangible amber of memory. Don left the experience without surfeit, without tension, without exhaustion. He sat peacefully with his hands in Miss Phoebe's, not dazzled, not numb, replenished in some luxurious volume within him which kept what it gained for all of life, and which had an infinite capacity. But for the cloth over her face and the odd fact that their hands were dripping with perspiration, they might just that second have begun. It may even have been that second.

Miss Phoebe disengaged her hands and plucked away the cloth. She was smiling—really smiling, and Don understood why she so seldom smiled, if this were the expression she used for such experiences.

He answered the smile, and said nothing, because about perfect things nothing can be said. He went and dried his hands and then pulled back the drapes and raised the blinds while she straightened the chairs.

"THE ancients," said Miss Phoebe, "recognized four elements: earth, air, fire and water. This power can do anything those four elements can do." She put down the clean cups, and went to get her crumb brush. "To start with," she added.

He placed the remark where it would soak in, and picked up a piece of icing from the cake plate. This time he ate it. "Why is a wet towel darker than a dry one?"

"I—why, I hadn't thought," she said. "It is, now that you mention it. I'm sure I don't know why, though."

"Well, maybe you know this," he said. "Why I been worrying about it so much?"

"Worrying?"

"You know what I mean. That and why most motors that use heat for power got to have a

cooling system, and why do paper towels tear where they ain't perf'rated, and a zillion things like that. I never used to."

"Perhaps it's . . . yes, I know. Of *course!*" she said happily. "You're getting a—call it a kinship with things. A sense of interrelationship."

"Is that good?"

"I think it is. It means I was right in feeling that you have a natural talent for what I'm going to teach you."

"It takes up a lot of my time," he grumbled.

"It's good to be alive all the time," she said. She poured. "Don, do you know what a revelation is?"

"I heard of it."

"It's a sudden glimpse of the real truth. You had one about the wasps."

"I had it awful late."

"That doesn't matter. You had it, that's the important thing. You had one with the rat, too."

"I did?"

"With the wasps you had a revelation of sacrifice and courage. With the rat—well, you know yourself what effect it has had on you."

"I'm the only one I know has no girl," he said.

"That is exactly it."

"Don't tell me it's s'posed to be that way!"

"For you, I—I'd say so."

"Miss Phoebe, I don't think I know what you're talkin' about."

She looked at her teacup. "I've never been married."

"Me too," he said somberly.

"Wait, is that what you—"

"Why do people get married?"

"Kids."

"Oh, that isn't all."

He said, with his mouth full, "They wanna be together, I guess. Team up, like. One pays the bills, the other runs the joint."

"That's about it. Sharing. They want to share. You know the things they share."

"I heard," he said shortly.

She leaned forward. "Do you think they can share anything like what we've had this afternoon?"

"*That* I never heard," he said pensively.

"I don't wonder. Don, your revelation with the rat is as basic a picture of what is called 'original sin' as anything I have ever heard."

"Original sin," he said thoughtfully. "That's about Adam an'—no, wait. I remember. Everybody's supposed to be sinful to start with because it takes a sin to get'm started."

"ONCE in a while," she said, "it seems as if you know so few words because you don't need them. That was beautifully put. Don, I think that awful thing that happened to you in the sewer was a blessing. I think it's a good thing, not a bad one. It might be bad for someone else, but not for you. It's

kept you as you are, so far. I don't think you should try to forget it. It's a warning and a defense. It's a weapon against the 'yin' forces. You are a very special person, Don. You were made for better things than—than others."

"About the wasps," he said. "As soon as you started to talk I begun to feel better. About this, I don't feel better." He looked up to the point where the wall met the ceiling and seemed to be listening to his own last phrase. He nodded definitely. "I don't feel better. I feel worse."

She touched his arm. It was the only time she had made such a gesture. "You're strong and growing and you're just eighteen." Her voice was very kind. "It would be a strange thing indeed if a young man your age didn't have his problems and struggles and tempta—I mean, battles. I'm sorry I can't resolve it for you, Don. I wish I could. But I know what's right. Don't I, Don, don't I?"

"Every time," he said glumly. "But I . . ." His gaze became abstracted.

She watched him anxiously. "Don't think about her," she whispered. "Don't. You don't have to. Don, do you know that what we did this afternoon was only the very beginning, like the first day of kindergarten?"

His eyes came back to her, bright.

"Yeah, huh. Hey, Miss Phoebe, how about that."

"When would you like to do some more?"

"Now?"

"Bless you, no! We both have things to do. And besides, you have to think. You know it takes time to think."

"Yeah, okay. When?"

"A week."

"Don't worry about me, I'll be here. Hey, I'm gonna be late for work."

He went to the door. "Take it easy," he said.

He went out and closed the door but before the latch clicked he pushed it open again. He crossed the room to her.

He said, "Hey, thanks for the birthday cake. It was . . ." His mouth moved as he searched. "It was a good birthday cake." He took her hand and shook it heartily. Then he was gone.

Miss Phoebe was just as pink as the birthday cake. To the closed door she murmured, "Take it easy."

DON was in a subway station two nights later, waiting for an express. The dirty concrete shaft is atypical and mysterious at half-past four in the morning. The platforms are unlittered and deserted, and there is a complete absence of the shattering roar and babble and bustle for which these

urban entrails are built. An approaching train can be heard starting and running and stopping sometimes ten or twelve minutes before it pulls in, and a single set of footfalls on the mezzanine above will outlast it. The few passengers waiting seem always to huddle together near one of the wooden benches, and there seems to be a kind of inverse square law in operation, for the closer they approach one another the greater the casual unnoticing manners they affect, though they will all turn to watch someone walking toward them from two hundred feet away. And when angry voices bark out, the effect is more shocking than it would be in a cathedral.

A tattered man slept uneasily on the bench. Two women buzz-buzzed ceaselessly at the other end. A black-browed man in gray tweed strode the platform, glowering, looking as if he were expected to decide on the recall of the Ambassador to the Court of St. James by morning.

Don happened to be looking at the tattered man, and the way the old brown hat was pulled down over the face, (it could have been a headless corpse, and no one would have been the wiser) when the body shuddered and stirred. A strip of stubbled skin emerged between the hat and the collar, and developed a mouth into which was stuffed a soggy collection of leaf-

mold which may have been a cigar butt yesterday. The man's hand came up and fumbled around for the thing. The jaws worked, the lips smacked distastefully. The hand pushed the hatbrim up only enough to expose a red eye, which glared at the butt. The hat fell again, and the hand pitched the butt away.

At this point the black-browed man hove to, straddle-legged in front of the bench. He opened his coat and hooked his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat. He tilted his head back, half-closed his eyes, and sighted through the cleft on his chin at the huddled creature on the bench. "You!" he grated, and everyone swung around to stare at him. He thumped the sleeping man's ankle with the side of his foot. "You!" Everyone looked at the bench.

The tattered man said "Whuh-wuh-wuh-wuh," and smacked his lips. Suddenly he was bolt upright, staring.

"You!" barked the black-browed man. He pointed to the butt. "Pick that up!"

THE tattered man looked at him and down at the butt. His hand strayed to his mouth, felt blindly on and around it. He looked down again at the butt and dull recognition began to filter into his face. "Oh, sure, boss, sure," he whined. He cringed low, beginning to stoop

down off the bench but afraid to stop talking, afraid to turn his gaze away from the danger point. "I don't make no trouble for anybody, mister, not me, honest I don't," he wheedled. "A feller gets down on his luck, you know how it is, but I never make trouble, mister . . ."

"Pick it up!"

"Oh sure, sure, right away, boss."

THAT was when Don, to his amazement, felt himself approaching the black-browed man. He tapped him on the shoulder.

"Mister," he said. He prayed that his tight voice would not break. "Mister, make *me* pick it up, huh?"

"*What?*"

Don waved at the tattered man. "A two-year-old kid could push him around. So what are you proving, you're a big man or something? Make *me* pick up the butt, you're such a big man."

"Get away from me," said the black-browed man. He took two quick paces backward. "I know what you are, you're one of those subway hoodlums."

Don caught a movement from the corner of his eye. The tattered man had one knee on the platform, and was leaning forward to pick up the butt. "Get away from that," he snapped, and kicked the butt onto the local tracks.

"Sure, boss, sure, I don't want no . . ."

"Get away from me, both of you," said the black-browed man. He was preparing for flight. Don suddenly realized that he was afraid—afraid that he and the tattered man might join forces, or perhaps even that they had set the whole thing up in advance. He laughed. The black-browed man backed into a pillar. And just then a train roared in, settling the matter.

Something touched Don between the shoulder-blades and he leaped as if it had been an icepick. But it was one of the women. "I just had to tell you, that was very brave. You're a fine young man," she said. She sniffed in the direction of the distant tweed-clad figure and marched to the train. It was a local. Don watched it go, and smiled. He felt good.

"Mister, you like to save my life, you did. I don't want no trouble, you unnerstan', I never do. Feller gets down on his luck once in a wh—"

"Shaddup!" said Don. He turned away and froze. Then he went back to the man and snatched off the old hat. The man cringed.

"I know who you are. You just got back from the can. You got sent up for attackin' a girl."

"I ain't done a *thing*," whispered the man. "Gimme back my hat, please, mister?"



...AND MY FEAR IS GREAT...

DON looked down at him. He should walk away, he ought to leave this hulk to rot, but his questing mind was against him. He threw the hat on the man's lap and wiped his fingers on the side of his jacket. "I saw you stayin' out of trouble three nights ago on Mulberry Street. Followin' a girl into a house there."

"It was you chased me," said the man. "Oh God." He tucked himself up on the bench in a uterine position and began to weep.

"Cut that out," Don snarled. "I ain't hit you. If I wanted I coulda thrown you in front of that train, right?"

"Yeah, instead you saved me f'm that killer," said the man brokenly. "Y'r a prince, mister. Y'r a real prince, that's what you are."

"You goin' to stay away from that girl?"

"*Your girl?* Look, I'll never even walk past her house no more. I'll kill anybody looks at her."

"Never mind that. Just *you* stay away from her."

The express roared in. Don rose and so did the man. Don shoved him back to the bench. "Take the next one."

"Yeah, sure, anything you say. Just you say the word."

Don thought, *I'll ask him what it is that makes it worth the risk, chance getting sent up for life just for a thing like that.* Then, *No*, he thought. *I think I know why.*

He got on the train.

He sat down and stared dully ahead. *A man will give up anything, his freedom, his life even, for a sense of power. How much am I giving up? How should I know?*

He looked at the advertisements. "Kulgies are better." "The better skin cream." He wondered if anyone ever wanted to know what these things were better *than*. "For that richer, creamier, safer lather." "Try Miss Phoebe for that better, more powerful power."

He wondered, and wondered . . .

SUMMER dusk, all the offices closed, the traffic gone, no one and nothing in a hurry for a little while. Don put his back against a board fence where he could see the entrance, and took out a toothpick. She might be going out, she might be coming home, she might be home and not go out, she might be out and not come home. He'd stick around.

He never even got the toothpick wet.

She stood at the top of the steps, looking across at him. He simply looked back. There were many things he might have done. Rushed across. Waved. Done a time-step. Looked away. Run. Fallen down.

But he did nothing, and the single fact that filled his perceptions at that moment was that as long as she stood there with russet gleaming in her black hair, with

her sad, sad cups-for-laughter eyes turned to him, with the thin summer cloak whipping up and falling to her clean straight body, why there was nothing he could do.

She came straight across to him. He broke the toothpick and dropped it, and waited. She crossed the sidewalk and stopped in front of him, looking at his eyes, his mouth, his eyes. "You don't even remember me."

"I remember you all right."

She leaned closer. The whites of her eyes showed under her pupils when she did that, like the high crescent moon in the tropics that floats startlingly on its back. These two crescents were twice as startling. "I don't think you do."

"Over there." With his chin he indicated her steps. "The other night."

It was then, at last, that she smiled, and the eyes held what they were made for. "I saw him again."

"He try anything?"

She laughed. "He *ran*! He was afraid of me. I don't think anybody was ever afraid of me."

"I am."

"Oh, that's the silliest—" She stopped, and again leaned toward him. "You mean it, don't you?"

He nodded.

"Don't ever be afraid of me," she said gravely, "not *ever*. What did you do to that man?"

"Nothin'. Talked to him."

"You didn't hurt him?"

He nodded.

"I'm glad," she said. "He's sick and he's ugly and he's bad, too, I guess, but I think he's been hurt enough. What's your name?"

"Don."

SHE counted on her fingers. "Don is a Spanish grandee. Don is putting on clothes. Don is the sun coming up in the morning. Don is . . . is the opposite of up. You're a whole lot of things, Don." Her eyes widened. "You laughed!"

"Was that wrong?"

"Oh, *no*! But I didn't know you ever laughed."

"I watched you for three hours the other night and *you* didn't laugh. You didn't even talk."

"I would've talked if I'd known you were there. Where were you?"

"That all night joint. I followed you."

"Why?"

He looked at his shoeshine. With his other foot, he carefully stepped on it.

"Why did you follow me? Were you going to talk to me?"

"No!" he said. "No, by God, I wasn't. I wouldn'ta."

"Then why did you follow me?"

"I liked looking at you. I liked seeing you walk." He glanced across at the brownstone steps. "I didn't want anything to happen to you, all alone like that."

"Oh, I didn't care."

"That's what you said that night."

The shadow that crossed her face crossed swiftly, and she laughed. "It's all right now."

"Yeah, but what was it?"

"Oh," she said. Her head moved in an impatient gesture, but she smiled at the sky. "There was nothing and nobody. I left school. Daddy was mad at me. Kids from school acted sorry for me. Other kids, the ones you saw, they made me tired. I was tired because they were the same way all the time about the same things all the time, and I was tired because they kept me up so late."

"What did you leave school for?"

"I found out what it was for."

"It's for learning stuff."

"It isn't," she said positively. "It's for learning how to learn. And I know that already. I can learn anything. Why did you come here today?"

"I wanted to see you. Where were you going when you came out?"

"Here," she said, tapping her foot. "I saw you from the window. I was waiting for you. I was waiting for you yesterday too. What's the matter?"

He grunted.

"Tell me, tell me!"

"I never had a girl talk to me like you do."

"Don't you like the way I talk?" she asked anxiously.

"Oh for Pete's sake it ain't that!" he exploded. Then he half-smiled at her. "It's just I had a crazy idea. I had the idea you always talk like this. I mean, to anybody."

"I don't, I don't!" she breathed. "Honestly, you've got to believe that. Only you. I've always talked to you like this."

"What do you mean always?"

"Well, everybody's got somebody to talk to, all their life. You know what they like to talk about and when they like to say nothing, when you can be just silly and when they'd rather be serious and important. The only thing you don't know is their face. For that you wait. And then one day you see the face, and then you have it all."

"You ain't talkin' about *me*!"

"Yes I am."

"**L**OOK," he said. He had to speak between heartbeats. He had never felt like this in his whole life before. "You could be—takin' a—*awful* chance."

She shook her head happily.

"Did you ever think maybe everybody ain't like that?"

"It doesn't matter. I am."

His face pinched up. "Suppose I just walked away now and never saw you again."

"You wouldn't."

"But suppose."

"Why then I—I'd've had this. Talking to you."

"Hey, you're crying!"

"Well," she said, "there you were, walking away."

"You'd've called me back though."

She turned on him so quickly a tear flew clear off her face and fell sparkling to the back of his hand. Her eyes blazed. "Never that!" she said between her teeth. "I want you to stay, but if you want to go, you go, that's all. All I want to do is make you want to stay. I've managed so far . . ."

"How many minutes?" he teased.

"Minutes? Years," she said seriously.

"The—somebody you talked to, you kind of made him up, huh?"

"I suppose."

"How could he ever walk away?"

"Easiest thing in the world," she said. "Somebody like that, they're somebody to live up to. It isn't always easy. You've been very patient," she said. She reached out and touched his cheek.

He snatched her wrist and held it, hard. "You know what I think," he said in a rough whisper, because it was all he had. "I think you're out of your goddam head."

She stood very straight with her eyes closed. She was trembling.

"What's your name, anyway?"

"Joyce."

"I love you too, Joyce. Come on, I want you to meet a friend of

mine. It's a long ride on the subway and I'll tell you all about it."

HE tried hard but he couldn't tell her all of it. For some of it there were no words at all. For some of it there were no words he could use. She was attentive and puzzled. He bought flowers from a cart, just a few—red and yellow rosebuds.

"Why flowers?"

He remembered the mirror. That was one of the things he hadn't been able to talk about. "It's just what you do," he said, "bring flowers."

"I bet she loves you."

"Whaddaya mean, she's pushin' sixty!"

"All the same," said Joyce, "if she does she's not going to like me."

They went up in the elevator. In the elevator he kissed her.

"What's the matter, Don?"

"If you want to crawl around and whimper like a puppy-dog," he whispered, "if you feel useful as a busted broom-handle and worth about two wet sneezes in a hailstorm—this is a sense of power?"

"I don't understand."

"Never mind."

In the corridor he stopped. He rubbed a smudge off her nose with his thumb. "She's sorta funny," he said. "Just give her a little time. She's quite a gal. She looks like Sunday school and talks the same

way but she knows the score. Joyce, she's the best friend I ever had."

"All right all right all *right!* I'll be good."

He kissed where the smudge had been.

"Come on."

One of Miss Phoebe's envelopes was stuck to the door by its flap. On it was his name.

They looked at one another and then he took the envelope down and got the note from it.

Don:

I am not at home. Please phone me this evening.

P. W.

"Don, I'm *sorry!*"

"I shoulda phoned. I wanted to surprise her."

"Surprise her? She knew you were coming."

"She didn't know you were coming. Damn it anyway."

"Oh it's all right," she said. She took his hand. "There'll be other times. Come on. What'll you do with those?"

"The flowers? I dunno. Want 'em?"

"They're hers," said Joyce.

He gave her a puzzled look. "I got a lot of things to get used to. What do you mean when you say somethin' that way?"

"Almost exactly what I say."

He put the flowers against the door and they went away.

THE phone rang four times before Miss Phoebe picked it up.

"It is far too late," she said frigidly, "for telephone calls. You should have called earlier, Don. However, it's just as well. I want you to know that I am *very* displeased with you. I have given you certain privileges, young man, but among them is not that of calling on me unexpectedly."

"Miss—"

"Don't interrupt. In addition, I have never indicated to you that you were free to—"

"But Miss Ph—"

"—to bring to my home any casual acquaintance you happen to have scraped up in heaven knows where—"

"Miss *Phoebe!* Please! I'm in jail."

"—and invade my—you are *what?*"

"Jail, Miss Phoebe, I got arrested."

"Where are you now?"

"County. But you don't need—"

"I'm coming right down," said Miss Phoebe.

"No, Miss Phoebe, I didn't call you for that. You go back to b—"

Miss Phoebe hung up.

MISS Phoebe strode into the County Jail with grim familiarity, and before her, red tape disappeared like confetti in a blast-furnace. Twelve minutes after she

arrived she had Don out of his cell and into a private room, his crisp new jail-record card before her, and was regarding him with a strange expression of wooden ferocity.

"Sit there," she said, as the door clicked shut behind an awed and reverberating policeman.

Don sat. He was rumped and sleepy, angry and hurt, but he smiled when he said, "I never thought you'd come. I never expected that, Miss Phoebe."

She did not respond. Instead she said coldly, "Indeed? Well, young man, the matters I have to discuss will not wait." She sat down opposite him and picked up the card.

"Miss Phoebe," he said, "could you be wrong about what you said about me and girls . . . that original sin business, and all? I'm all mixed up, Miss Phoebe. I'm all mixed up!" In his face was a desperate appeal.

"Be quiet," she said sternly. She was studying the card. "This," she said, putting the card down on the table with a dry snap, "tells a great deal, but says nothing. Public nuisance, indecent exposure, suspicion of rape, impairing the morals of a minor, resisting an officer, and destruction of city property. Would you care to explain this—this catalogue to me?"

"What you mean, tell you what happened?"

"That is what I mean."

"Miss Phoebe, where is she? What they done with her?"

"With whom? You mean the girl? I do not know; moreover, it doesn't concern me and it should no longer concern you. Didn't she get you into this?"

"I got her into it. Look, could you find out, Miss Phoebe?"

"I do not know what I will do. You'd better explain to me what happened."

A GAIN the look of appeal, while she waited glacially. He scratched his head hard with both hands at once. "Well, we went to your house."

"I am aware of that."

"Well, you wasn't home so we went out. She said take her father's car. I got a license; it was all right. So we went an' got the car and rode around. Well, we went to a place an' she showed me how to dance some. We went somewheres else an' ate. Then we parked over by the lake. Then, well, a cop come over and poked around an' made some trouble an' I got mad an' next thing you know here we are."

"I asked you," said Miss Phoebe evenly, "what happened?"

"Aw-w." It was a long-drawn sound, an admixture of shame and irritation. "We were in the car an' this cop came pussy-footin' up. He had a big flashlight *this* long. I seen him comin'. When he got to the car we was all right. I mean, I

had my arm around Joyce, but that's all."

"What *had* you been doing?"

"Talkin', that's all, just talkin', and . . ."

"And what?"

"Miss Phoebe," he blurted, "I always been able to say anything to you I wanted, about anything. Listen, I *got* to tell you about this. That thing that happened, the way it is with me and girls because of the rat, well, it just wasn't there with Joyce, it was nothin', it was like it never happened. Look, you and me, we had that thing with the hands; it was . . . I can't say it, you know how good it was. Well, with Joyce it was somepin' different. It was like I could fly. I never felt like that before. Miss Phoebe, I had too much these last few days, I don't know what goes on . . . you was right, you was always right, but this I had with Joyce, that was right too, and they can't both be right." He reached across the table, not quite far enough to touch her. The reaching was in his eyes and his voice.

Miss Phoebe stiffened a spine already straight as a bowstring. "I have asked you a simple question and all you can do is gibber at me. *What happened in that car?*"

SLOWLY he came back to the room, the hard chair, the bright light, Miss Phoebe's implacable face. "That cop," he said. "He

claimed he seen us. Said he was goin' to run us in, I said what for, he said carryin' on like that in a public place. There was a lot of argument. Next thing you know he told Joyce to open her dress, he said when it was the way he seen it before he'd let me know. Joyce she begun to cry an' I tol' her not to do it, an' the cop said if I was goin' to act like that he would run us in for *sure*. You know, I got the idea if she'd done it he'da left us alone after?

"So I got real mad, I climbed out of the car, I tol' him we ain't done nothin', he pushes me one side, he shines the light in on Joyce. She squinchin' down in the seat, cryin', he says, 'Come on, you, you know what to do.' I hit the flashlight. I on'y meant to get the light off her, but I guess I hit it kind of hard. It came up and clonked him in the teeth. Busted the flashlight too. That's the city property I destroyed. He started to cuss and I tol' him not to. He hit me and opened the car door an' shoved me in. He got in the back an' took out his gun and tol' me to drive to the station house." He shrugged. "So I had to. That's all."

"It is not all. You have not told me what you did before the policeman came."

He looked at her, startled. "Why, I—we—" His face flamed, "I love her," he said, with difficulty, as if he spoke words in a new

and troublesome tongue. "I mean I . . . do, that's all."

"What did you do?"

"I kissed her."

"What else did you do?"

"I—" He brought up one hand, made a vague circular gesture, dropped the hand. He met her gaze. "Like when you love somebody, that's all."

"Are you going to tell me exactly what you did, or are you not?"

"Miss Phoebe . . ." he whispered, "I ain't never seen you look like that."

"I want the whole filthy story," she said. She leaned forward so far that her chin was only a couple of inches from the table top. Her protruding, milky eyes seemed to whirl, then it was as if a curtain over them had been twitched aside, and they blazed.

Don stood up. "Miss Phoebe," he said. "Miss Phoebe . . ." It was the voice of terror itself.

Then a strange thing happened. It may have been the mere fact of his rising, of being able, for a moment, to stand over her, look down on her. "Miss Phoebe," he said, "there — ain't — no — filthy — story."

She got up and without another word marched to the door. As she opened it the boy raised his fists. His wrists and forearms corded and writhed. His head went back, his lungs filled, and

with all his strength he shouted the filthiest word he knew. It had one syllable, it was sibilant and explosive, it was immensely satisfying.

Miss Phoebe stopped, barely in balance between one pace and the next, momentarily paralyzed. It was like the breaking of the drive-coil on a motion picture projector.

"They locked her up," said Don hoarsely. "They took her away with two floozies an' a ole woman with DT's. She ain't never goin' to see me again. Her ole man'll kill me if he ever sets eyes on me. You were all I had left. Get the hell out of here . . ."

She reached the door as it was opened from the other side by a policeman, who said, "What's goin' on here?"

"Incorrigible," Miss Phoebe spat, and went out. They took Don back to his cell.

THE courtroom was dark and its pew-like seats were almost empty. Outside it was raining, and the statue of Justice had a broken nose. Don sat with his head in his hands, not caring about the case then being heard, not caring about his own, not caring about people or things or feelings. For five days he had not cared about the white-washed cell he had shared with the bicycle thief; the two prunes and weak coffee for breakfast, the blare of the radio in the inner

court; the day in, day out screaming of the man on the third tier who hoarsely yelled, "I didn't do it I didn't do it I didn't do . . ."

His name was called and he was led or shoved—he didn't care which—before the bench. A man took his hand and put it on a book held by another man who said something rapidly. "I do," said Don. And then Joyce was there, led up by a tired kindly old fellow with eyes like hers and an unhappy mouth. Don looked at her once and was sure she wasn't even trying to recognize his existence. If she had left her hands at her sides, she was close enough for him to have touched one of them secretly, for they stood side by side, facing the judge. But she kept her hands in front of her and stood with her eyes closed, with her whole face closed, her lashes down on her cheeks like little barred gates.

The cop, the lousy cop was there too, and he reeled off things about Don and things about Joyce that were things they hadn't done, couldn't have done, wouldn't do . . . he cared about that for a moment, but as he listened it seemed very clear that what the cop was saying was about two other people who knew a lot about flesh and nothing about love; and after that he stopped caring again.

When the cop was finished, the kindly tired man came forward and said that he would press no

charges against this young man if he promised he would not see his daughter again until she was twenty-one. The judge pushed down his glasses and looked over them at Don. "Will you make that promise?"

Don looked at the tired man, who turned away. He looked at Joyce, whose eyes were closed. "Sure," he told the judge.

There was some talk about respecting the laws of society which were there to protect innocence, and how things would be pretty bad if Don ever appeared before that bench again, and next thing he knew he was being led through the corridors, back to the jail, where they returned the wallet and fountain pen they had taken away from him, made him sign a book, unlocked three sets of doors and turned him loose. He stood in the rain and saw, half a block away, Joyce and her father getting into a cab.

About two hours later one of the jail guards came out and saw him. "Hey, boy. You like it here?"

Don pulled the wet hair out of his eyes and looked at the man, and turned and walked off without saying anything.

"WELL, hello!"

"Now you get away from me, girl. You're just going to get me in trouble and I don't want no trouble."

"I won't make any trouble for you, really I won't. Don't you want to talk to me?"

"Look, you know me, you heard about me. Hey, you been sick?"

"No."

"You look like you been sick. I was sick a whole lot. Fellow down on his luck, everything happens. Here comes the old lady from the delicatessen. She'll see us."

"That's all right."

"She'll see you, she knows you, she'll see you talkin' to me. I don't want no trouble."

"There won't be any trouble. Please don't be afraid. I'm not afraid of you."

"I ain't scared of you either but one night that young fellow of yours, that tall skinny one, he said he'll throw me under a train if I talk to you."

"I have no fellow."

"Yes you have, that tall skin—"

"Not any more. Not any more . . . talk to me for a while. Please talk to me."

"You sure? You sure he ain't . . . you ain't . . ."

"I'm sure. He's gone, he doesn't write, he doesn't care."

"You been sick."

"No, no, no, no!—I want to tell you something: if ever you eat your heart out over something, hoping and wishing for it, dreaming and wanting it, doing everything you can to make yourself fit

for it, and then that something comes along, know what to do?"

"I do' wan' no trouble . . . yea, grab it!"

"No. *Run!* Close your eyes and turn your back and run away. Because wanting something you've never had hurts, sometimes, but not as much as having it and then losing it."

"I never had *nothing*."

"You did so. And you were locked up for years."

"I didn't have it, girl. I used it. It wasn't mine."

"You didn't lose it, then—ah, I see!"

"If a cop comes along he'll pinch me just because I'm talkin' to you. I'm just a bum, I'm down on my luck, we can't stand out here like this."

"Over there, then. Coffee."

"I ain't got but four cents."

"Come on. I have enough."

"What's a matter with you, you want to talk to a bum like me!"

"Come on, come on . . . listen, listen to this:

"It is late last night the dog was speaking of you; the snipe was speaking of you in her deep marsh. It is you are the lonely bird throughout the woods; and that you may be without a mate until you find me.

"You promised me and you said a lie to me, that you would be before me where the sheep are

flocked. I gave a whistle and three hundred cries to you; and I found nothing there but fleeting lamb.

"You promised me a thing that was hard for you, a ship of gold under a silver mast; twelve towns and a market in all of them, and a fine white court by the side of the sea.

"You promised me a thing that is not possible; that you would give me gloves of the skin of a fish; that you would give me shoes of the skin of a bird, and a suit of the dearest silk in Ireland.

"My mother said to me not to be talking with you, to-day or to-morrow or on Sunday. It was a bad time she took for telling me that, it was shutting the door after the house was robbed . . .

"You have taken the east from me, you have taken the west from me, you have taken what is before me and what is behind me; you have taken the moon, you have taken the sun from me, and my fear is great you have taken God from me."

" . . . That's something I remembered. I remember, I remember everything."

"That's a lonesome thing to remember."

"Yes . . . and no one knows who she was. A man called Yeats heard this Irish girl lamenting, and took it down."

"I don't know, I seen you

around, I never saw you like this, you been sick."

"Drink your coffee and we'll have another cup."

Dear Miss Phoebe:

Well dont fall over with surprise to get a letter from me I am not much at letter writing to any body and I never thot I would wind up writing to you.

I know you was mad at me and I guess I was mad at you too. Why I am writing this is I am trying to figure out what it was all about. I know why I was mad I was mad because you said there was something dirty about what I did. Mentioning no names. I did not do nothing dirty and so thats why I was mad.

But all I know about you Miss Phoebe is you was mad I dont know why. I never done nothing to you I was ascarred to in the first place and anyway I thot you was my freind. I thot anytime there was something on my mind I could not figure it out, all I had to do was to tell you. This one time I was in more trouble then I ever had in my entire. All you did you got mad at me.

Now if you want to stay mad at me thats your busnis but I wish you would tell me why. I wish we was freinds again but okay if you dont want to.

Well write to me if you feel like it at the Seamans Institute thats where I am picking up my mail these days I took a ride on a tank ship and was sick most of the time but thats life.

I am going to get a new fountain pen this one wont spell right (joke). So take it easy yours truly Don.

DON came out of the Seaman's Institute and stood looking at the square. A breeze lifted and dropped, carrying smells of fish

and gasoline, spices, sea-salt, and a slight chill. Don buttoned up his pea-jacket and pushed his hands down into the pockets. Miss Phoebe's letter was there, straight markings on inexpensive, efficient paper, the envelope torn almost in two because of the way he had opened it. He could see it in his mind's eye without effort.

My Dear Don:

Your letter came as something of a surprise to me. I thought you might write, but not that you would claim unawareness of the reasons for my feelings toward you.

You will remember that I spent a good deal of time and energy in acquainting you with the nature of Good and the nature of Evil. I went even further and familiarized you with a kind of union between souls which, without me, would have been impossible to you. And I feel I made quite clear to you the fact that a certain state of grace is necessary to the achievement of these higher levels of being.

Far from attempting to prove to me that you were a worthy pupil of the teachings I might have given you, you plunged immediately into actions which indicate that there is a complete confusion in your mind as to Good and Evil. You have grossly defiled yourself, almost as if you insisted upon being unfit. You engaged in foul and carnal practices which make a mockery of the pure meetings of the higher selves which once were possible to you.

You should understand that the Sources of the power I once offered you are ancient and sacred and not to be taken lightly. Your complete lack of reverence for these antique matters is to me the most unforgivable part of

your inexcusable conduct. The Great Thinkers who developed these powers in ancient times surely meant a better end for them than that they be given to young animals.

Perhaps one day you will become capable of understanding the meaning of reverence, obedience, and honor to ancient mysteries. At that time I would be interested to hear from you again.

Yours very truly,
(Miss) Phoebe Watkins.

Don growled deep in his throat. Subsequent readings would serve to stew all the juices from the letter; one reading was sufficient for him to realize that in the note was no affection and no forgiveness. He remembered the birthday cake with a pang. He remembered the painful hot lump in his throat when she had ordered him to wash his face; she had *cared* whether he washed his face or not.

He went slowly down to the street. He looked older; he felt older. He had used his seaman's papers for something else besides entree to a clean and inexpensive dormitory. Twice he had thought he was near that strange, blazing loss of self he had experienced with Miss Phoebe, just in staring at the living might of the sea. Once, lying on his back on deck in a clear moonless night, he had been sure of it. There had been a sensation of having been *chosen* for something, of having been fingertip-close to some simple huge fact, some great normal coalescence of time and

distance, a fusion and balance, like yin and Yang, in all things. But it had escaped him, and now it was of little assistance to him to know that his sole authority in such things considered him as disqualified.

"Foul an' carnal practices," he said under his breath. *Miss Phoebe*, he thought, *I bet I could tell you a thing or two about 'reverence, obedience an' honor to ancient mysteries.'* In a flash of deep understanding, he saw that those who hold themselves aloof from the flesh are incapable of comprehending this single fact about those who do not: only he who is free to take it is truly conscious of what he does when he leaves it alone.

SOMEONE was in his way. He stepped aside and the man was still in the way. He snapped out of his introspection and brought his sight back to earth, clothed in an angry scowl.

For a moment he did not recognize the man. He was still tattered, but he was clean and straight, and his eyes were clear. It was obvious that he felt the impact of Don's scowl, he retreated a short pace, and with the step were the beginnings of old reflexes; to cringe, to flee. But then he held hard, and Don had to stop.

"Y'own the sidewalk?" Don demanded. "Oh—it's you."

"I got to talk to you," the man said in a strained voice.

"I got nothin' to talk to you about," said Don. "Get back underground where you belong. Go root for cigar butts in the subway."

"It's about Joyce," said the man.

Don reached and gathered together the lapels of the man's old jacket. "I told you once to stay away from her. That means don't even talk about her."

"Get your hands off me," said the man evenly.

Don grunted in surprise, and let him go.

The man said, "I had somepin' to tell you, but now you can go to hell."

Don laughed. "What do you know! What are you — full of hash or somethin'?"

The man tugged at the lapels and moved to pass Don. Don caught his arm. "Wait. What did you want to tell me?"

The man looked into his face. "Remember you said you was going to kill me, I get near her?"

"I remember."

"I seen her this morning. I seen her yesterday an' four nights last week."

"The hell you did!"

"You got to get that through your head 'fore I tell you anything."

Don shook his head slowly. "This beats anything I ever seen. What happened to you?"

As if he had not heard, the man said, "I found out what ship you was on. I watched the papers. I figured you'd go to the Institoot for mail. I been waitin' three hours."

Don grabbed the thin biceps. "Hey. Is somethin' wrong with Joyce?"

"You give a damn?"

"Listen," said Don, "I can still break your damn neck."

The man simply shrugged.

Baffled, Don said, between his teeth, "Talk. You said you wanted to talk — go ahead."

"Why ain't you wrote to her?"

"What's that to you?"

"It's a whole lot to her."

"You seem to know a hell of a lot."

"I told you I see her all the time," the man pointed out.

"She must talk a lot."

"To me," said the man, closing his eyes, "a whole lot."

"She wouldn't want to hear from me," Don said. Then he barked, "What are you tryin' to tell me? You and her — what are *you* to her? You're not messin' with her, comin' braggin' to me about it?"

THE man put a hand on Don's chest and pushed him away. There was disgust on his face, and a strange dignity. "Cut it out," he said. "Look, I don't like you. I don't like doin' what I'm doin' but I got to. Joyce, she's been half

crazy, see. I don't know why she started to talk to me. Maybe she just didn't care any more, maybe she felt so bad she wanted to dive in a swamp an' I was the nearest thing to it. She been talkin' to me, she . . . smiles when she sees me. She'll eat with me, even."

"You shoulda stayed away from her," Don mumbled uncertainly.

"Yeah, maybe. And suppose I did, what would she do? If she didn't have me to talk to, maybe it would be someone else. Maybe someone else wouldn't . . . be as . . . leave her . . ."

"You mean, take care of her," said Don softly.

"Well, if you want to call it that. Take up her time, anyway, she can't get into any other trouble." He looked at Don beseechingly. "I ain't never laid a hand on her. You believe that?"

Don said, "Yeah, I believe that."

"You going to see her?"

Don shook his head.

The man said in a breathy, shrill voice, "I oughta punch you in the mouth!"

"Shaddup," said Don miserably. "What you want me to see her for?"

Suddenly there were tears in the weak blue eyes. But the voice was still steady. "I ain't got nothin'. I'll never have nothin'. This is all I can do, make you go back. Why won't you go back?"

"She wouldn't want to see me,"

said Don, "after what I done."

"You better go see her," whispered the man. "She thinks she ain't fit to live, gettin' you in jail and all. She thinks it was her fault. She thinks you feel the same way. She even . . . she even thinks that's right. You dirty rotten no-good lousy —" he cried. He suddenly raised his fists and hit his own temples with them, and made a bleating sound. He ran off toward the waterfront.

Don watched him go, stunned to the marrow. Then he turned blindly and started across the street. There was a screeching of brakes, a flurry of movement, and he found himself standing with one hand on the front fender of a taxi.

"Where the hell you think you're goin'?"

Stupidly, Don said, "What?"

"What's the matter with you?" roared the cabby.

Don fumbled his way back to the rear door. "A lot, a whole lot," he said as he got in. "Take me to 37 Mulberry street," he said.

IT was three days later, in the evening, when he went to see Miss Phoebe.

"Well!" she said when she opened to his ring.

"Can I come in?"

She did not move. "You received my letter?"

"Sure."

"You understood . . ."

"I got the idea."

"There were — ah — certain conditions."

"Yeah," said Don. "I got to be capable of understandin' the meaning of reverence, obedience, an honor to certain ancient mysteries."

"Have you just memorized it, or do you feel you really are capable?"

"Try me."

"Very well." She moved aside.

He came in, shoving a blue knitted cap into his side pocket. He shucked out of the pea-jacket. He was wearing blue slacks and a black sweater with a white shirt and blue tie. He was as different from the scrubbed schoolboy neatness of his previous visit as he was from the ill-fit flashiness of his first one. "How've you been?"

"Well, thank you," she answered coolly. "Sit down."

They sat facing one another. Don was watchful, Miss Phoebe wary.

"You've . . . grown," said Miss Phoebe. It was made not so much as a statement, but as an admission.

"I did a lot," said Don. "Thought a lot. You're so right about people in the world that work for — call it yin an' Yang — an' know what they're doin', why they're doin' it. All you got to do is look around you. Read the papers."

She nodded. "Do you have any difficulty in determining which side these people are on?"

"No more."

"If that's true," she said, "it's wonderful." She cleared her throat. "You've seen that — that girl again."

"I couldn't lie."

"Are you willing to admit that beastliness is no substitute for the true meeting of minds?"

"Absolutely."

"Well!" she said. "This *is* progress!" She leaned forward suddenly. "Oh, Don, that wasn't for you. Not you! You are destined for great things, my boy. You have no idea."

"I think I have."

"And you're willing to accept my teaching?"

"Just as much as you'll teach me."

"I'll make tea," she said, almost gaily. She rose and as she passed him she squeezed his shoulder. He grinned.

When she was in the kitchenette he said, "Fellow in my neighborhood just got back from a long stretch for hurting a little girl."

"Oh?" she said. "What is his name?"

"I don't know."

"Find out," she said. "They have to be watched."

"Why?"

"Animals," she said, "wild animals. They have to be caught and

caged, to protect society."

He nodded. The gesture was his own, out of her range. He said, "I ate already. Don't go to no trouble."

"Very well. Just some cookies." She emerged with the tea service. "It's good to have you back. I'm rather surprised. I'd nearly given you up."

He smiled. "Never do that."

SHE poured boiling water from the kettle into the teapot and brought it out. "You're almost like a different person."

"How come?"

"Oh, you — you're much more self-assured." She looked at him searchingly. "More complete. I think the word for it is 'integrated'. Actually, I can't seem to . . . to . . . Don, you're not hiding anything from me, are you?"

"Me? Why, how could I do that?"

She seemed troubled. "I don't know." She gave him a quick glance, almost spoke, then shook her head slightly.

"What's the matter? I do something wrong?"

"No, oh no."

They were quiet until the tea was steeped and poured.

"Miss Phoebe . . ."

"What is it?"

"Just what did you think went on in that car before we got arrested?"

"Isn't that rather obvious?"

"Well," he said, with a quick smile, "to me, yeah. I was there."

"You can be cleansed," she said confidently.

"Can I now! Miss Phoebe, I just want to get this clear in my mind. I think you got the wrong idea, and I'd like to straighten you out. I didn't go the whole way with that girl."

"You didn't?"

He shook his head.

"Oh," she said. "The policeman got there in time after all."

He put down his teacup very carefully. "We had lots of time. What I'm telling you is we just didn't."

"Oh," she said. "Oh!"

"What's the matter, Miss Phoebe?"

"Nothing," she said, tensely. "Nothing. This . . . puts a different complexion on things."

"I sort of thought you'd be glad."

"But of course!" She whirled on him. "You are telling me the truth, Don?"

"You can get in an' out of County," he reminded her. "There's records of her medical examination there that proves it, you don't believe me."

"Oh," she said, "oh dear." Suddenly her face cleared. "Perhaps I've underestimated you. What you're telling me is that you . . . you didn't *want* to, is that it? But

you said that the old memory of the rat left you when you were with her. Why didn't you — *why*?"

"Hey — easy, take it easy! You want to know why, it was because it wasn't the time. What we had would last, it would keep. We didn't have to grab."

"You . . . really felt that way about her?"

He nodded.

"I had no idea," she said in a stunned whisper. "And afterward . . . did you . . . do you still . . ."

"You can find out, can't you? You know ways to find out what I'm thinking."

"I can't," she cried. "I can't! Something has happened to you. I can't get in, it's as if there were a steel plate between us!"

"I'm sorry," he said with grave cheerfulness.

SHE closed her eyes and made some huge internal effort. When she looked up, she seemed quite composed. "You are willing to work with me?"

"I want to."

"Very well. I don't know what has happened and I must find out, even if I have to use . . . drastic measures."

"Anything you say, Miss Phoebe."

"Lie down over there."

"On that? I'm longer than it is!" He went to the little sofa and maneuvered himself so that at least

his shoulder-blades and head were horizontal. "Like so?"

"That will do. Make yourself just as comfortable as you can." She threw a tablecloth over the lampshade and turned out the light in the kitchenette. Then she drew up a chair near his head, out of his visual range. She sat down.

It got very quiet in the room. "You're sleepy, you're so sleepy," she said softly. "You're sl —"

"No I ain't," he said briskly.

"Please," she said, "fall in with this. Just let your mind go blank and listen to me."

"Okay."

She droned on and on. His eyes half-closed, opened, then closed all the way. He began to breathe more slowly, more deeply.

"... And sleep, sleep, but hear my voice, hear what I am saying, can you hear me?"

"Yes," he said heavily.

"Lie there and sleep, and sleep, but answer me truthfully, tell me only the truth, the truth, answer me, whom do you love?"

"Joyce."

"You told me you restrained yourself the night you were arrested. Is this true?"

"Yes."

Miss Phoebe's eyes narrowed. She wet her lips, wrung her hands.

"The union you had with me, that flight of soul, was that important to you?"

"Yes."

"Would you like to do more of it?"

"Yes."

"Don't you realize that it is a greater, more intimate thing than any union of the flesh?"

"Yes."

"Am I not the only one with whom you can do it?"

"No."

Miss Phoebe bit her lip. "Tell the truth, the truth," she said raggedly. "Who else?"

"Joyce."

"Have you ever done it with Joyce?"

"Not yet."

"Are you sure you can?"

"I'm sure."

MISS PHOEBE got up and went into the kitchenette. She put her forehead against the cool tiles of the wall beside the refrigerator. She put her fingertips on her cheeks, and her hands contracted suddenly, digging her fingers in, drawing her flesh downward until her scalding, tightshut eyes were dragged open from underneath. She uttered an almost soundless whimper.

After a moment she straightened up, squared her shoulders and went noiselessly back to her chair. Don slumbered peacefully.

"Don, go on sleeping. Can you hear me?"

"Yes."

"I want you to go down deeper

and deeper and deeper, down and down to a place where there is nothing at all, anywhere, anywhere, except my voice, and everything I say is true. Go down, down, deep, deep . . ." On and on she went, until at last she reached down and gently rolled back one of his eyelids. She peered at the eye, nodded with satisfaction.

"Stay down there, Don, stay there."

She crouched in the chair and thought, hard. She knew of the difficulty of hypnotically commanding a subject to do anything repugnant to him. She also knew, however, that it is a comparatively simple matter to convince a subject that a certain person is a pillow, and then fix the command that a knife must be thrust into that pillow.

She pieced and fitted, and at last, "Don, can you hear me?"

His voice was a bare whisper, slurred, "Yes . . ."

"The forces of evil have done a terrible thing to Joyce, Don. When you see her again she will look as before. She will speak and act as before. But she is different. The real Joyce has been taken away. A substitute has been put in her place. The substitute is dangerous. You will know, when you see her. You will not trust her. You will not touch her. You will share nothing with her. You will

put her aside and have nothing to do with her.

"But the real Joyce is alive and well, although she was changed. I saved her. When she was replaced by the substitute, I took the real Joyce and made her a part of me. So now when you talk to Miss Phoebe you are talking to Joyce, when you touch Miss Phoebe you are touching Joyce, when you kiss and hold and love Miss Phoebe you will be loving Joyce. Only through Miss Phoebe can you know Joyce, and they are one and the same. And you will never call Joyce by name again. Do you understand?"

"Miss . . . Phoebe is . . . Joyce now . . ."

"That's right."

Miss Phoebe was breathing hard. Her mouth was wet.

"You will remember none of this deep sleep, except what I have told you. Don," she whispered, "my dear, my dear . . ."

PRESENTLY she rose and threw the cloth off the lampshade. She felt the teapot; it was still quite hot. She emptied the hot-water pot and filled it again from the kettle. She sat down at the tea-table, covered her eyes, and for a moment the only sound in the room was her deep, slow, controlled breathing as she oxygenated her lungs.

She sat up, refreshed, and

poured tea. "Don! Don! Wake up, Don!"

He opened his eyes and stared unseeingly at the ceiling. Then he raised his head, sat up, shook himself.

"Goodness!" said Miss Phoebe. "You're getting positively absent-minded. I like to be answered when I speak to you."

"Whuh? Hm?" He shook himself again and rose. "Sorry, Miss Phoebe. Guess I sorta . . . did you ask me something?"

"The tea, the tea," she said with pleasant impatience. "I've just poured."

"Oh," he said. "Good."

"Don," she said, "we're going to accomplish so *very* much."

"We sure are. And we'll do it a hell of a lot faster with your help."

"I beg—*what*?"

"Joyce and me," he said patiently. "The things you can do, that planting a reflection in a mirror the way you want it, and knowing who's at the door and on the phone and all . . . we can sure use those things."

"I—I'm afraid I don't . . ."

"Oh God, Miss Phoebe, don't! I hate to see you cut yourself up like this!"

"You were faking."

"You mean just now, the hypnosis routine? No I wasn't. You had me under all right. It's just that it won't stick with me. Every-

thing worked but the commands."

"That's—impossible!"

"No it ain't. Not if I had a deeper command to remember 'em—and disregard 'em."

"Why didn't I think of that?" she said tautly. "*She* did it!"

He nodded.

"She's evil, Don, can't you see? I was only trying to save—"

"I know what you were tryin' to save," he interrupted, not unkindly. "You're in real good shape for a woman your age, Miss Phoebe. This power of yours, it keeps you going. Keeps your glands going. With you, that's a problem. With us, now, it'll be a blessing. Pity you never thought of that."

"Foul," she said, "how perfectly foul . . ."

"No it ain't!" he rapped. "Look, maybe we'll all get a chance to work together after all, and if we do, you'll get an idea what kind of chick Joyce is. I hope that happens. But mind you, if it don't, we'll get along. We'll do all you can do, in time."

"I'd *never* cooperate with evil!"

"**Y**OU went and got yourself a little mixed up about that, Miss Phoebe. You told me yourself about yin an' Yang, how some folks set a course straight an' true an' never realize the boundary can twist around underneath them. You asked me just tonight was I

sure which was which, an' I said yes. It's real simple. When you see somebody with power who is usin' it for what Yang stands for—good, an' light, an' all like that, you'll find he ain't usin' it for himself."

"I wasn't using it for myself!"

"No, huh?" He chuckled. "Who was it I was goin' to kiss an' hold just like it was Joyce?"

She moaned and covered her face. "I just wanted to keep you pure," she said indistinctly.

"Now that's a thing you got to get straightened out on. That's a big thing. Look here." He rose and went to the long bookcase. Through her fingers, she watched him. "Suppose this here's all the time that has passed since there was anything like a human being on earth." He moved his hand from one end of the top shelf to the other. "Maybe way back at the beginning they was no more 'n smart monkeys, but all the same they had whatever it is makes us human beings. These forces you talk about, they were operatin' then just like now. An' the cave men an' the savages an' all, hundreds an' hundreds of years, they kept developing until we got humans like us.

"All right. You talk about ancient mysteries, your Yoga an' all. An' this tieup with virgins. Look, I'm going to show you somepin. You an' all your studyin' and copyin' the ancient secrets, you

know how ancient they were? I'll show you." He put out his big hand and put three fingers side by side on the "modern" end of the shelf.

"Those three fingers covers it — down to about fourteen thousand years before Christ. Well, maybe the thing did work better without sex. But only by throwin' sex into study instead of where it was meant to go. Now you want to free yourself from sex in your thinkin', there's a much better way than that. You do it like Joyce an' me. We're a bigger unit together than you ever could be by yourself. An' we're not likely to get pushed around by our glands, like you. No offense, Miss Phoebe . . . so there's your *really* ancient mystery. Male an' female together; there's a power for you. Why you s'pose people in love get to fly so high, get to feel like gods?" He swept his hand the full length of the shelf. "A *real* ancient one."

"Wh-where did you learn all this?" she whispered.

"Joyce. Joyce and me, we figured it out. Look, she's not just any chick. She quit school because she learns too fast. She gets everything right now, this minute, as soon as she sees it. All her life everyone around her seems to be draggin' their feet. An' besides, she's like a kid. I don't mean childish, I don't mean simple, I mean like she believes in something even

when there's no evidence around for it, she keeps on believing until the evidence comes along. There must be a word for that."

"Faith," said Miss Phoebe faintly.

HE came and sat down near her. "Don't take it so hard, Miss Phoebe," he said feelingly. "It's just that you got to stand aside for a later model. If anybody's going to do Yang work in a world like this, they got to get rid of a lot of deadwood. I don't mean you're deadwood. I mean a lot of your ideas are. Like that fellow was in jail about the little girl, you say *watch 'im!* one false move an' back in the cage he goes. And all that guy wanted all his life was just to have a couple people around him who give a damn, 'scuse me, Miss Phoebe. He never had that, so he took what he could get from whoever was weaker'n him, and that was only girls. You should see him now, he's goin' to be our best man."

"You're a child. You can't undertake work like this. You don't know the powers you're playing with."

"Right. We're goin' to make mistakes. An' that's where you come in. Are you on?"

"I — don't quite —"

"We want your help," he said, and bluntly added, "but if you can't help, don't hinder."

"You'd want to work with me after I . . . Joyce, Joyce will hate me!"

"Joyce ain't afraid of you." Her face crumpled. He patted her clumsily on the shoulder. "Come on, what do you say?"

She sniffled, then turned red-rimmed, protruding eyes up to him. "If you want me. I'd have to . . . I'd like to talk to Joyce."

"Okay. JOYCE!"

Miss Phoebe started. "She — she's not — *oh!*" she cried as the doorknob turned. She said, "It's locked."

He grinned. "No it ain't."

Joyce came in. She went straight to Don, her eyes on his face, searching, and did not look around her until her hand was in his. Then she looked down at Miss Phoebe.

"This here, this is Joyce," Don said.

Joyce and Miss Phoebe held each other's eyes for a long moment, tense at first, gradually softening. At last Miss Phoebe made a tremulous smile.

"I'd better make some tea," she said, gathering her feet under her.

"I'll help," said Joyce. She turned her face to the tea-tray, which lifted into the air and floated to the kitchenette. She smiled at Miss Phoebe. "You tell me what to do."

Theodore Sturgeon

all of you

No woman on Earth could ever love like this!

By **JAMES McCONNELL**

Illustrated by **BALBALIS**

HOW well I remember you,
my darling. I see you even
now as I saw you then,
that strange orange evening when
your silver steed plunged down to
find a haven upon my world of
Frth. Even these months hence I
can picture in exact detail the full
male warmth of your glorious body
as it was that hallowed night. I
can recall in minuteness the wavy
black and silver of your hair, the

soothing ruddiness of your complexion and the enticing brownness of your eyes.

Run, run, oh, my darling!

I had been with the other women that first night and was returning to my dwelling by myself when I saw the tongue of flame lash across the sky. For a moment I thought the gods were spitting fire at me. But then the flame melted to earth a short distance away, its amber heat searing the foliage to a charred blue. And through the flame I made out the silver sheen of your carriage.

You will never understand the emotions that caught at me when I realized who and what you might be! When I was young, the Matriarch had mentioned the coming of gods who rode in fiery chariots, but in the intervening years I had lapsed into disbelief. And suddenly, as if to prove the error of my lagging faith, you appeared. Will you ever comprehend the overwhelming sensations I felt that night?

I ran to you then with the speed of a thousand, as you must run tonight.

Faster, my love, faster! Tonight your fear must give you wings!

THE fire had burned a path to your chariot when I reached it, and I ran through the hot ashes heedless of the pain to my naked feet. For I knew that you must be

inside, waiting for me to come to you. The door was open, and so I entered.

And you were there, crouched behind some monstrous piece of metal, hoping, perhaps, to shield your glorious body from my sight. But I looked and saw your wonderful stature and knew at once that my heart was lost to you forever. The empathetic organs of my body began to pulsate with devotion. My mind reached out and touched at yours, offering to you the utter devotion of an eternal slave.

What a delicious thing it is to recall the delicate trembling of your beautiful jowls as you looked at me, determining, I am sure, my worth and worthiness. But I had faith. Remember that, my darling. I knew that you would not deny me the companionship I so avidly sought.

For a long time—what a horribly delightful time it was for me—you stayed huddled in your corner, immobile save for the scarcely perceptible quivering of your tantalizing body. Until I could stand it no longer and moved forward to caress you. And you opened your eyes widely as if to see me better and raised your hands in the universal sign of acceptance and resignation. And I knew that you were mine!

I reached my long and hopeless-

ly slender arms around the glory of your soft and yielding torso and felt the rapid and elated beating of your heart. And I led you gently from your heavenly steed to the quiet coolness of my love-dwelling.

I AWOKE before you did that bright morning after the night you came to me. For a long time I lay beside you, thrilled by the warmth of your flesh, my eyes closed to the delicious experience. And then, you too awoke and my mind made contact with yours.

"Where am I?"

As you spoke these words your eyes traveled up and down the length of my reclining body. I entered your mind half hesitantly, fearful of what I would find there. For I am still young and ill-formed, running to slenderness instead of to the corpulence that is the universal mark of beauty.

But, oh, my darling, what a great and overwhelming pleasure it was to find that you seemed to approve of what you saw, and in your mind I beheld visions of pleasures which I had before then only dreamed of. Somehow, to you, I seemed beautiful, and I was glad.

And then I felt the tenor of your thinking shift and you repeated, "Where am I?"

I told you with my mind, and then again with my voice. But still you did not understand. And

so I drew on the ground a picture of the sun and the other five planets and wrote *FIRTH* in large letters by ours, the sixth planet, and made you realize that this was where you were. Then, I pointed to the fifth planet and again at you.

In your supreme cleverness you caught on at once.

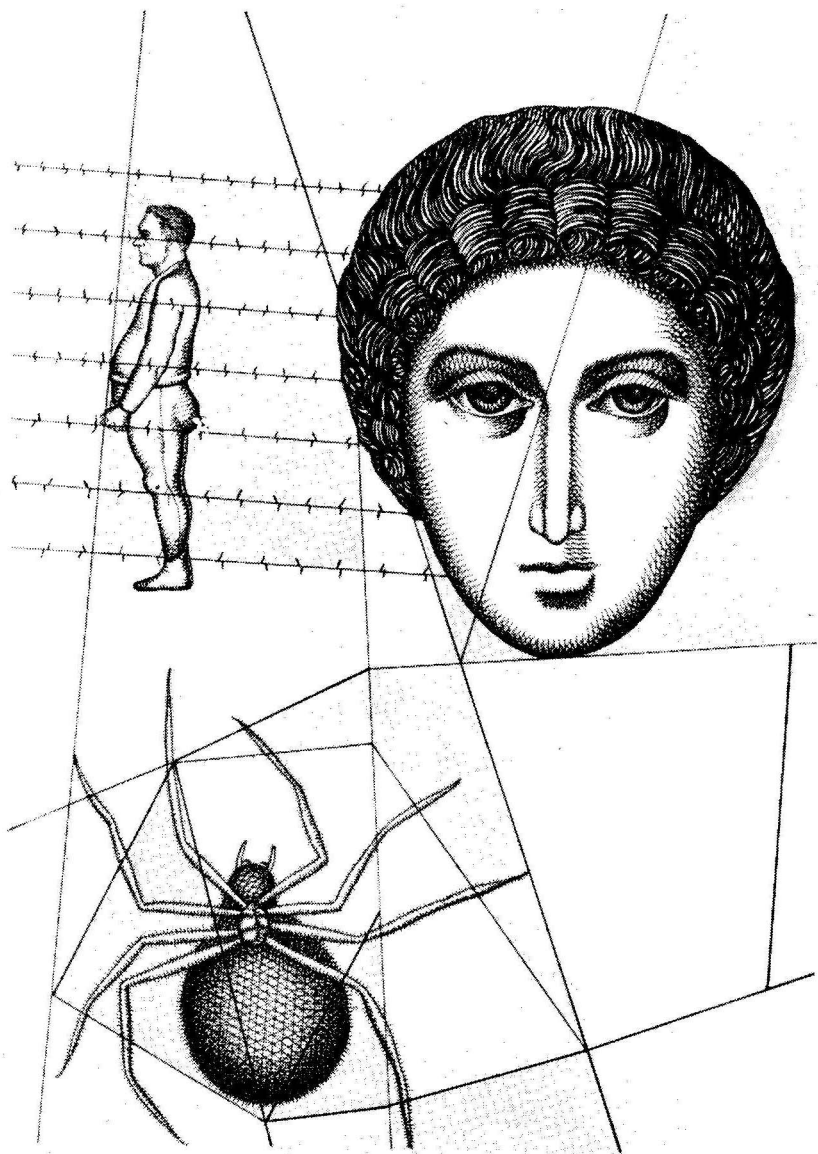
"No," you said softly, "I am not from there." You drew on the ground some distance away another sun, surrounded by nine planets, and pointed out the third. "Here's my home."

YOU smiled then and lay back on the couch. Your mind clouded a bit, and although I could follow all your thoughts, many of them seemed strange and incomprehensible.

"Good ole Mother Earth. Home, Sweet Home. I don't even know where it is from here. Lost, that's what I am, lost. Maybe I'll never see New York again, never again eat clam chowder, never watch another baseball game, never again see her."

You began to cry. I reached out to you, taking you into my arms, running my fingers slowly through your hair, sending you comforting and sympathetic thoughts.

"I hated it. I despised Earth—loathed it. And everybody on it," you wept. "Most of all I hated her. Oh, I loved her, but I came to hate



her. Can you understand?

"She was beautiful, wonderful, just what I'd always wanted. She was the first pretty girl who ever looked at me twice, and I was 35 years old. So we got married. And that first night—oh, God!"

You looked up at me, your face in tears, your pleasing double chins red from the bending of your neck. I stroked your face gently, soothingly.

"That first night — our honeymoon — when I came to her, she *laughed!* Can you understand that? Laughed! 'You're a fat beast,' she said. 'Get away from me. I never want to see you again, you obese slob!' I could have killed her!

"She had tricked me, because of my money. I never saw her again, but I hated her with all my heart. And there was another girl, later, who laughed at me too. I couldn't stand it, so I bought the spaceship and just headed out, away from Earth. Nobody wanted me there."

You were still crying. I leaned over and kissed you. If the women of your planet were such fools not to appreciate you, it was not my fault. How badly I wanted you!

You looked up at me and smiled after I kissed you. I entered your mind again and shared contentment with you. For you were thinking of the love we had known the night before, and I was pleased.

Go on, go on! Faster yet! For the spell of love is not yet complete.

IT WAS later that I arose and prepared for the first meal at the day. Succulent fruit I took and threaded them with rich, heavy cream. Nuts from the biggest trees I opened for you, warming their savory meats over the open fire. Fat grubs, rescued from more predatory insects, I basted in their own juices until they turned a golden amber, full of flesh-giving energy.

And all the time I worked, I sang to myself. I was very happy, for it is the purpose of the happy woman to protect the beauty of her chosen male. And as I looked at you, thinking of the food, I knew that you would grow in weight, that you would increase in stature beyond even the fondest dreams of any woman on Frth.

"I . . . I think I will call you Josephine," you told me as you ate. "And I will be your Napoleon. We'll live here forever in exile. And we'll do nothing all day long but—eat," you said, winking at me and reaching for more fruit and cream. My heart wanted to burst!

"I don't guess I could tell you how much it means to me, your liking me and all that. For the first time in my life, I'm happy. I feel like I really *belong*, if you know what—" You broke off. "Oh, oh. Here comes somebody. Is it all right for me to be here?"

And then it was I saw them,

coming down the path towards us—the grandmother and the mother and the elder sisters, six of them in all. But it was the grandmother who spoke to us, as was befitting her station.

“This is the one—the male who came in last night’s rain of golden fire?”

I could see her eyes covering you, coveting you.

“Yes, most honored Matriarch. He is one of the god-men from beyond our sun.”

“What do they want, Josephine?” you asked, for of course you could not understand their words.

“He is well formed, is he not, my child?” the grandmother said. I could sense even as she spoke these words the horrible fate she had planned for us in her wicked jealousy.

“He is most beautiful, beloved Mother.”

“And you feel since you were the one who found him, since it was you who first took him in, that you should have the first and claimant rights to him?” she asked with soft avarice.

“He is mine, most hallowed of women. We love one another, and he is to be the father of my children. The fates have willed it so.”

The old woman’s voice crashed with thunder: “He is not yours! He belongs to all of us—then to the one who is best qualified to re-

ceive him as a husband!”

“Have I done something wrong, Josephine?”

I could not answer you, beloved, for my heart was in my mouth. I knew the trickery that this one, my own parent, was capable of.

The Matriarch was waiting for a sign of opposition so that she could have me destroyed. But I was too clever for that. Even though it meant losing face in your sight for the moment, I offered no resistance.

“He will be taken to the man-compound at once, to be held there until the official beginning of the mating season,” she roared, hoping again to provoke me to open hostility. When I made no move, she changed her tactics. “What a wonderful husband he will make,” she repeated, again eying the splendor of your physique. “How many children he will father for some lucky woman.”

I could scarcely stand her taunts, but already, most dear one to my heart, a plan was forming in my mind. You would be mine yet!

“Guards, take him away!” the Old One shouted.

“Josephine, what are they doing? Don’t let them take me away from you! I love you, Josephine! Tell them that I’ll marry you. Don’t let them take me away!”

I felt the confusion in your mind, the lostness that over-

whelmed you as my rude sisters led you away from me. And how much I desired to tell you that I was lost too. How much I wanted to tell you to wait patiently until the time was ripe.

But now, my heart's desire, you must not wait, you must not tarry. Oh, there! You've stumbled! Get up, my love! Stand up and run! For death is close behind you!

THAT first night away from you, how my body ached with loneliness, how I longed for the enveloping warmth of your soft and pliable flesh! But I held myself firm to my purpose, for by then my plan was complete.

The next day I visited you at the man-compound. How proud and attractive you looked, how you stood out in beauty from the so poorly formed male specimens of Frth's impoverished race.

I brought to you that day the richest, most pungently flavored foods to be found in Frth. Day by day I tempted you to eat, adding pound after pound of handsomeness to your already perfect body. The Matriarch watched my every move jealously, but with a secret smile. For she planned to have you for herself. That, I and all my sisters understood.

And so I let her watch and smile, for she knew nothing of my plan. And I, alone, knew that she would be forced to accept one of

the shabby, over-muscular Frthian males in your place. How I hated her?

For three long months I fed you. Then, one morning, the Matriarch stopped me as I came away from the man-compound.

"Why do you waste so much of your time and company on the foreign man-god?" she asked me tauntingly, a twisted grin on her face. "Do you not realize that in just two more nights the mating season will begin and the man-compound will be opened to all the eligible women in Frth?"

"I do this because I love him, Most Venerable One, and because I cannot do otherwise, no matter what the outcome."

"Ah, it is well. You are young and fleet of foot. Perhaps you will outdistance the others after all," she said.

But I knew it to be a lie. She would never have allowed you in the open competition. However, I did not care. For I alone knew that you would be mine long before then.

LA TE that evening I slipped away from my dwelling and hid beside the man-compound where you were an unwilling prisoner. The guards were few, for all but one or two were resting well for the festivities that would begin the following night. All that night they would spend in sacred

dancing and celebration, and with the first rays of the sun the next morning, the doors to the man-compound would be opened to them. This year's pitiful crop of just-maturing males would be up for competition, going to the fleetest of the eligible women.

I waited for hours, hesitantly, frightened, wondering if my plan would work.

And then, I felt creep over me the wonderful sensation of womanhood, and I knew I had won!

I had outguessed the Matriarch! She had forgotten that when a woman of our race first comes to maturity, the mating cycle is often out of harmony with the rest of our group. Usually it begins a full two days early! I was mature, ready for you a full two days before the Old One had thought I would be!

With all the stealth at my command I overcame the two of my sisters guarding the compound. I threw open the wooden gate and walked boldly into your pen.

You looked at me in surprise, but when you saw it was I, your look changed to *horror*. Oh, that I could make you understand how this thrilled and delighted me! I reached out to your mind, and sharing your thoughts, I understood and was happy.

For the other males in the compound had told you something of the finale of our fertility rites! You had not comprehended all of what

they had said, your mind was in confusion, but you had gathered enough to be terribly frightened.

"Josephine," you cried out, "you can't! Not me! You don't want *me*, Josephine, you—you—*cannibal!*"

I opened my arms to embrace you, but you ducked and squirmed away from me and fled screaming from the compound, the layers of fat bouncing as you waddled rapidly into the night.

THANKFUL beyond words I set out slowly to follow you. For this was as it had to be. Frthian males must always run from the females, or the mating cycle cannot come to fullness.

The secretions that my body carries are poisonous under normal circumstances. But, when administered to a male who is completely fatigued, to a male who has run for so many hours that he cannot move another step, the poisons do not kill. Instead, they create a suspended animation.

If you had not discovered just enough to flee when you saw me, you would have been dead by now. For I could not have long controlled my passions. Then I, too, would have died from the premature use of the poisons.

But it is hours now since you have fled from me through the blue darkness of the forests. How carefully, how devotedly I have followed you, pacing your every

step, anticipating your every movement, listening to your fat screams with infinite delight.

Soon it will be time and I will catch up with you. The sheaths of my fangs will retract and I will give to you the searing kiss of a fully matured woman. And slowly, softly, you will collapse in my arms.

Gently I will pick you up and carry you back to our dwelling. I will rest your body well on the bier of honor, making you as comfortable as possible.

And then, after the mating cycle is completed, we will wait.

As I go about my daily tasks, moving around your resting place, my mind will be with yours constantly, sharing your every thought. For your mind will be unaffected by the paralysis of your body.

Linked together mentally we will come to know the intimate secrets of the beginning of new life. Thus united we will experience the glorious day when the eggs that I have laid break open

and our children emerge to feed upon your rich flesh.

We will feel, as if we were one, our offspring as they burrow through your tissues, drawing sustenance from your amplexity.

How proud, how happy you will be to feel them growing larger, growing stronger, within you every day! And over the long, long months I will share with you these exquisite sensations.

Oh, you will father so many strong children!

NOW it is time. You are lying on the ground beside me, panting. I feel the great weariness of you. I see the great shiningness in your eyes—and I am ready.

Do not fight me—this part is so swift! Just one deep kiss, one gentle nip you will not even feel, a long caress of love . . .

Oh, my darling, I love you so!



By the early 17th Century, the power of magic was being disputed by the more daring thinkers of the time.

Pierre Le Loyer, a magistrate of Angers, for example, wrote in 1605: "As to transmutation, I wonder how it can reasonably be defended. Metals can be adulterated, but not changed . . . I do not believe . . . that the alchemists can change any metal into gold."

The learned gentleman deserves credit for his courage in expressing this dangerous opinion, but the alchemists were nearer the truth than he was. With our modern technology, metals are transmuted constantly in atomic piles. The goal of alchemy was real and obtainable; the method was wrong.

*If only he'd kept his big mouth
shut this would not have been . . .*

The day the world ended

By FRANK M. ROBINSON

IT WAS one night last July when I made the bet. That was when I first met Professor Arnold.

It was a hot and muggy evening, and naturally even hotter in the television studio. With my usual good luck I had picked that night to get material for an article about

the studio side of TV. The particular program I was watching had promised much. Actually it delivered little and I was glad when it finally came to an end.

I was just getting ready to leave when the program manager tugged on my sleeve and caught my attention.

Illustrated by JAMES

"Mr. Wyser, if you've got a moment I'd like you to meet the guest on tonight's program."

I didn't have a moment and I wasn't interested in meeting the guest on tonight's or any other night's program. I kept thinking of how much I wanted to take a cold shower and open a can of the beer that Nancy always kept in the icebox.

"Why, I'd be glad to," I said. The sweat was inching down my back and gluing my shirt to me like a bandage. Of course little things like that aren't supposed to bother you when you have a chance to meet a Mr. Big.

Hein, the fat little program manager, was very formal.

"Professor Arnold, I'd like you to meet Bill Wyser. He does the radio and TV column for the Trib." We shook hands and Hein looked as proud as if he had just become the father of twins. A moment later an assistant tagged him and he hustled off, leaving a trail of apologies in his wake.

Without Hein to keep the ball rolling, the professor and I squared away and looked each other over like experienced boxers.

HE WAS a slight looking man, a little in need of a haircut and wearing a suit that had probably served nobly for both his undergraduate and graduate years. He wasn't very old, but you got

the impression that in another ten years he'd be wispy and frail, smoking an old battered pipe and looking very wise.

I tried to remember that Steinmetz looked anything but imposing in a rumpled serge suit and that my friend Arnold might be a very big wheel at some university or government atomic plant.

It was a nice try but I didn't quite succeed. I stood there feeling hot and sweaty and a little bored. It showed in my face, I suppose.

"If you'd like to duck for home," he said, "go right ahead. I've something I want to talk over with Hein."

It was a lie and we both knew it. I caught myself rather liking him for it. But beating it for home was out. Hein wouldn't like it and there was always the chance that some day Hein might introduce me to somebody I actually wanted to meet.

I mentally juggled my outline for the column and figured out a spot for an interview with Arnold. He might prove interesting after all and it would certainly please Hein.

"The hell with Hein," I said. "How about leaving this hot-box and getting something to eat—on me?"

I suspected he had a pretty good hunch that I was after an interview. He didn't, however, hesitate a moment. "Why, I'd be delight-

ed," he said, and he looked as if he actually meant it.

We threaded our way out of the crowded studio and ended up on Randolph Street, the heart of Chicago's theater district. It was crowded with people looking for a good time in the muggy heat and not finding it.

The better restaurants, the ones with air conditioning, were filled with late theatergoers. I was about to suggest a walk-up eatery that was semi-exclusive and catered to the press when Arnold turned into a serve-yourself-and-save place. He probably did it out of habit, I thought. Ten to one this was the only place he ate in when he was downtown.

At any rate, it was a clean place and not too crowded. A wheezy fan at one end did its best, but it was still too hot. I took a tray, joined the line and idly wondered if I could tell the menu by the various smells.

We started talking about the hot weather and the twenty-eight different names under which restaurants sell hamburger and I gradually brought the conversation around to the TV program he had been on.

THE program had been based on a Science versus Superstition theme, with Professor Arnold entering the lists for science and some half-witted MC milking the superstition angle for all the gags

he could get out of it.

It wasn't a bad idea—it was just badly hammed up.

"That was a fairly interesting program you were on," I lied.

He smiled politely and said: "As a matter of fact, it was a terrible program. I knew it would be before I went on."

It wasn't exactly the response I had figured on.

"How come you went on, then?" I felt foolish as soon as I asked it. Guest stars are paid money and I supposed that professors could use money as much as—if not more than—the rest of us.

With Arnold, apparently, it was more than just the money involved.

"I'm a scientist," he said, as if that explained everything. "It's—well, call it a hobby of mine to fight superstition whenever I can. I've had some publicity on it, a few articles and radio shows. Even if the television show wasn't very good, I think it might have educated people a little."

I had a vague memory of a few radio programs, usually aired on a Friday the 13th, where mirrors had been broken, people had walked in front of black cats and under ladders; and other crazy things had been done to disprove various superstitions. Professor Arnold rang a bell as being one of the eminent Board of Authorities on

such things. I began to understand why he had been so willing for an interview.

"I didn't think many people were superstitious nowadays."

Arnold looked shocked at my ignorance.

"Have you ever been on the street when some shopkeeper is painting a sign and there's a ladder standing out from the building? Have you ever seen anybody walk under that ladder? Ninety-nine out of a hundred will walk in the street first, and the one who does walk under it does so with a sense of adventure and danger, believing just as sincerely as the rest that it brings bad luck."

"I always thought it was based on common sense," I said. "Suppose the ladder slips or the painter drops a can of paint or . . ."

I could see Professor Arnold didn't think it was funny.

"Anyway, I don't think many people actually believe in it," I finished lamely.

He suddenly held out his hand. "May I see your key chain a minute?"

I LOOKED surprised, unbuckled it and handed it over. Nestled among the keys was a tiny patch of fur and then I knew why he had wanted to see the chain. It was the remnants of a rabbit's foot that I had bought some years before.

"You see!" he said triumphantly. "Even you, Mr. Wyser! The foot is old and frayed and probably full of germs, but you've kept it for a good many years. Why? Because you believe it's lucky!"

He had me. For a long time I had tried to kid myself that I only hung on to the foot out of affection for an old possession—actually, I guess I kept it because I thought it was lucky.

"All right, you made your point, Professor. So what? I can't see where a few superstitions hurt anybody."

He leaned across the table, deadly serious.

"It's not specific little things like the left hind foot of a rabbit that I object to, Mr. Wyser! It's superstition in general. Science has fought superstition ever since the first cave man discovered it was intense heat that made things burn and not just the whim of his gods."

Hurrah for science, I thought faintly. The beer in the icebox seemed more inviting than ever. I could see that the evening might turn into a long one and I made a mental note never again to interview Savants who were pushing Causes.

"How come you're all wound up in this?"

He was back from the counter with a glass of milk.

"Superstition hinders science, Mr. Wyser." He stared bleakly

into his glass. "Do you know the definition of superstition?"

"I haven't looked it up lately," I said, annoyed.

"It's 'The acceptance of beliefs or practices groundless in themselves and inconsistent with the degree of enlightenment reached by the community to which one belongs.'"

"I think I see what you're driving at," I said. "If they believe in superstitions they won't accept the degree of scientific enlightenment reached by their community."

He nodded sagely, thinking that by phrasing it that way I agreed with him.

"People are dying because of superstitious beliefs, Mr. Wyser. I've had doctors come back from undeveloped countries and tell me how disease has swept native villages where superstitious beliefs keep people from applying modern sanitation principles. And that's only one example. How many people do you know who trust their lives to good luck charms instead of to common sense?"

MAYBE it was the hot evening—maybe it was because I was tired and wanted to go home. But I didn't feel like standing up and waving the flag for science. I looked at the line of tired people by the counter. I could walk up behind anybody in that line and yell "ATOM BOMB!" and they'd

probably have a heart seizure on the spot.

So much for scientific enlightenment, I thought. If I had to choose between dysentery and being blown to radioactive pieces, I'd prefer the former any day.

Arnold was still talking.

"You can't get people to believe in the facts of science if their damn little superstitions tell them otherwise. At best they'll compromise and try to believe in both."

The facts of science. I looked at him rather sadly. This was what the universities were turning out nowadays. The science-is-a-sacred-cow boys. People who believe you could pour mankind into a test tube, titrate it, and come up with all the answers to the problems of the human race.

"You know," I said, "a lot of superstitions start out just like scientific theories."

Arnold looked very surprised. "How?"

"Any theory is based on observations and experiments. You formulate a theory to bring order out of your observations. Maybe you formulate more than one theory. Then you test the theories to see which one is correct. Which is the correct one? Why, the theory upon which you can predict the order of events in an experiment."

"I don't see what you're driving at," he stated, slightly puzzled at the line I was taking.

"I'll try it another way," I said.
"What's an atom?"

"It all depends on the concept you're considering, Bohr's or . . ."

"But you don't actually know, do you?"

He was in a corner. "Well, no."

"But you have several dandy theories about it. And from those theories you can predict that things like atom bombs should be possible. Well, atom bombs have been made and they work just like the theories said they would. Therefore the theory is practical and useful. Or take another case. What's electricity?"

He spread his hands helplessly and I continued.

"Again, you're not actually sure. But we have toasters and washing machines and television sets that actually work, thus substantiating your electrical theories."

He gave in. "All right. But how does this tie in with superstition?"

I snapped the trap. "I could use several examples. I could, for example, tell you the very logical reasons why the government of Burma hires astrologers to cast the horoscopes of new cabinets.

"But I'll pick an easier one. There's a native tribe in the Trans-Jordan Valley that believes an eclipse is caused by a huge beast swallowing the Sun. When an eclipse occurs, all the members of the tribe get pots and pans and start beating on them to scare the

beast away. And, lo and behold, pretty soon the Sun reappears.

"You see? First you have their observations on the phenomena of a Solar eclipse. Then the theory they have evolved to explain it. And the proof of the theory is demonstrated when they beat on the pots and pans; they scare the beast away and the Sun reappears. And it always works. By scientific reasoning they have as much right to believe in their ideas of what causes an eclipse as we have to believe in ours."

ARNOLD was aghast, his thin face horror-stricken. "But it's not the same thing! It's not the same thing at all! Why, we can show by mathematics and astronomy . . ."

"The modern equivalent of pots and pans," I interrupted.

Arnold looked at me and slowly shook his head.

"Science is much more than just superstition, Mr. Wyser. You probably don't have the background to grasp the distinction. It's rather hard to discuss it with somebody who knows nothing about it."

You're not a member of the lodge if you don't pay homage to the ritual, I thought. I held a BS degree from a very reputable institution, but Arnold wouldn't understand anybody who had dropped science as a vocation because



of a preference for people over protons. I didn't mention it.

"Science," I mused, hoping to make him as sore as I was, "is mostly modern superstition."

As I hoped, he got angry.

"You're trying to defend superstitions, aren't you, Wyser?" He had dropped the Mister. He wasn't being polite any more.

"No," I said. "I just don't believe in a lot of the guff that the gentlemen in the stained laboratory smocks hand out. Just wait and a few years later they'll come up with entirely new explanations for the same phenomena. I'd just as soon slaughter the sacred cow as have it eat me out of house and home, Arnold. Or have it finish me off with an H-bomb dropped ten miles away."

"I'll bet," he said slowly, "that you can't find one superstition that has a more plausible explanation for a phenomenon than science does."

"All right," I said belligerently. "It's a bet. What do you want to put up? A set of encyclopedias?"

"No," he said. "Ten thousand dollars."

My face showed what I thought.

"Oh, I don't mean I would put up the money myself. The university would be willing to pay you that much. You and I could, say, put up a dollar apiece."

I let the sweat drip off my chin into my iced coffee. Ten thousand

dollars is a lot of money. And like most money that's mentioned in large sums, it seemed like it wouldn't be too hard to get.

Suddenly the whole situation struck me funny. I had been badgered into interviewing Arnold against my will and because of the heat and the late hour I was taking my anger out on him and being nasty about it.

I started to laugh. "I'm sorry," I said. "I meant this to be an interview and so far all it's been is an argument. Let's start all over."

He laughed and agreed and I went ahead with the straight interview. A few minutes later I paid the check and we went our separate ways.

WELL, that was the last I ever saw of Arnold. Hein was happy about the publicity and the interview and I was naturally happy that Hein was happy. The particular column I had written about Arnold got lost in the welter of yesterday's columns and I gradually forgot about him.

I didn't forget him all at once, though. Ten thousand dollars is a lot of money to forget. I checked with the university and it was a genuine offer. Ten grand for anybody who could dig up a superstition that offered a more reasonable explanation for a phenomenon than science did.

Ten grand is hard to ignore and

I began to play a sort of parlor game with myself. You know, analyze a superstition and see what there is to it. It wasn't easy to do. Things like good luck charms and the black cat myth are difficult to check on.

Some seemed easier. Take water dowsing, for example. That's where a local farmer uses a divining rod in searching for water. Now the thing to do would be to collect so many examples of people who had tried water dowsing, analyze the percentage of successes, and see if that percentage is greater than coincidence would allow for. At first it seemed like I had something. Lots of people had tried it and lots of people had been successful at it. The catch, of course, is that a lot more people had tried it and failed, and didn't care to mention the fact that they had tried it at all. People like to talk about their successes, not their failures.

There were a lot of things like that which seemed to promise a lot on the surface. I investigated them all and then, after a while, dropped it. So Arnold was right and I had taken the other side of the argument just to have something to talk about.

But today, after some eight months and several odd days have gone by since I saw Arnold, I've changed my mind. I was right and Arnold was wrong and I can col-

lect ten thousand dollars any time I want to.

I don't want to.

I would be perfectly happy not winning the ten grand. I'd be even happier if I could admit that I was wrong and pay Arnold my own personal dollar.

It's funny, in a way. Right now I know that Arnold knows I'm right, but I'm not getting any kind of a kick out of it. And I'd much, much rather be wrong.

I've tried to phone Nancy, but I can't get through. The Red Cross and the Army have taken over all the lines. I'd leave the office and drive home, but I don't think I would ever make it. You can hear the crowds on the streets below and the smashing of windows and people screaming. There's even a so-called prophet on the street corner, tattered and ignored until now. Now he's a big wheel. He's happy, probably the only man who is, because he's just founded a cult all of his own.

ABOUT two hours ago God turned out the lights and I remembered Arnold with something of a shock. I got a flashlight and went down to the morgue and got the frightened clerk to get the file on Arnold.

The last clipping was just a squib but it told me all I needed to know. About a month or so ago Arnold and a group of scientists

went over to Trans-Jordan on a university-sponsored mission.

I can guess what happened. Arnold would have been horrified at the natives' superstitions and he'd have tried to convert them to the primrose path of science and the atom. And he'd be out after one superstition in particular because I was the one who had told him all about it.

Arnold's probably recanting now and telling the natives that he was wrong and they were right but I don't think it will go over. Sometimes converts turn out to be more fanatical than the one who converts them. I wonder if they're tor-

turing poor Arnold by drawing graphs and charts back at him by flickering candlelight.

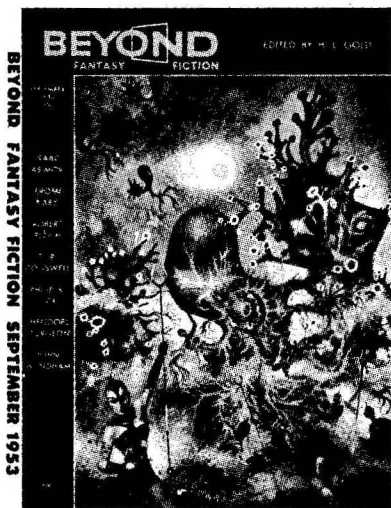
My flashlight's dimming now and it's getting rather difficult to type. I can feel a chill in the office. Most of the office force has left to try to find their way home and I suppose I'll be leaving in a few minutes to try and find mine.

But it won't be easy.

You see, there was an eclipse of the Sun two hours ago and it's been black as pitch ever since.

Frank Robinson

ON SALE JULY 23



IN THE NEXT ISSUE of BEYOND

Spell-weaving stories by these masters of fantasy . . .

ISAAC ASIMOV
JEROME BIXBY
ROBERT BLOCH
THEODORE COGSWELL
PHILIP K. DICK
THEODORE STURGEON
JOHN WYNDHAM

Watch for it at your local newsstand . . . here is a reproduction of its mesmeric cover by Powers, so you can't miss it . . . or, for six spine-tingling issues, send \$2.00 to:

GALAXY PUBLISHING CORP.
421 Hudson Street
New York 14, N. Y.

The Springbird

By **ROGER DEE**

*We've got cause and effect all wrong.
Death, for instance, brings sickness.
But what makes the seasons change?*

Illustrated by **BARTH**

THE seasons got stuck in April, and Marble County had a spring that was seven months long.

A seven-month spring is a plain enough miracle anywhere, and it made my neck of the woods — Payson's Falls and a twenty-mile circle of country around the town — famous. The news was in all the papers and on the radio, and once, along in the early part of November when other parts of the

country were having their first snows and freezes, a television crew came a hundred miles up from Atlanta to make a nationwide broadcast of our still-green willow runs and blossoming dogwood trees and our wild azaleas in bloom.

Newspaper reporters and Weather Bureau men from up North swarmed into our hills like locusts, quarreling with each other over accommodations and asking

questions right and left in their sharp, hasty voices.

But they never learned why the spring stayed on in Marble County. The hill folk never bothered with trying to find out; we're mostly a religious sort of people up here in the mountains, and it was an easy thing for us to call it an act of God and let it go at that.

I'd never have known why, either, if old Lysko Czernak hadn't come twice into Payson's Falls for a doctor, once in February and again in November, and roused me out of bed. The first time was for Rose — Lysko's daughter, who had married a local boy named Jason Wilder while he was training in an Army camp out West for the fighting overseas — and the second time for Josef, Rose's seven-year-old son. The three of them lived up on Moorehead Mountain in a mossy old two-room cabin that Jason had left to Rose when he was killed on Okinawa, and it was there that the sticking of the seasons began.

IT was two o'clock of a February morning, with a bitter hill-wind whining and sleet rattling against the windows, when old Lysko got me out of bed that first time. I stirred up the banked coals in my front-room fireplace and got into my bad-weather suit. Lysko watched me patiently with his long black eyes while the heat melted little

beads of ice on his eyebrows and curly mustache.

Lysko was a gipsy, with a gipsy's swarthy face and clever hands and the caged look his kind wear when they're indoors. His left earlobe had been pierced for a gold-coin earring, but he didn't wear one. He had quit wearing his usual bright gipsy clothing, too, shortly after he came to stay with Rose and the boy, because he was smart enough to see that the hill people distrusted that sort of heathen finery.

"Which is it, Lysko?" I asked as I got into my heavy overcoat. "Rose, or the boy?"

"It is my daughter," Lysko said. "She is dying."

I had been expecting it for months. Rose Wilder was a tubercular patient who refused to enter the state sanatorium because it meant leaving her son. The end had been certain from the beginning. I knew I couldn't do anything for her, but I went. Hill-country doctors do.

Josef, wrapped like a cocoon in layer after layer of blankets, was waiting outside on the front seat of Lysko's old Ford. The boy's face was thin and pinched and his eyes, long and black like Rose's and Lysko's, were as solemn as an owl's or a new baby's.

It startled me a little to find him there until I understood why Lysko had brought him. Lysko

had felt that his daughter would die before we reached the cabin, and he didn't want the boy to be alone with her when it happened.

I got out my own car and followed Lysko's Ford for half an hour over rutted hill roads through the wind and sleet. When we reached the cabin on Moorehead Mountain, I found that Lysko had been right. Rose's wrists were still warm, but the pulse had stopped. She looked small and frail and peaceful in the dim glow of the fireplace coals, and her old air of caged gipsy restlessness was gone.

LYSKO brought Josef in without unwrapping him and put him in a cane-backed rocking chair before the fireplace. Then he stirred up the coals and stood with his back to the blaze, warming his dark, clever hands and watching me with his face in shadow.

"Rose should have gone to the state hospital, Lysko," I said. "They could have helped her there."

He shook his head. "No. It would have been the same — Rose was right to stay here, with the boy."

In the shadow lying across his face I could just make out the high, thin curve of his nose and the dark shine of his eyes, and for just a moment there was something so old and calm and knowing about him that I was half afraid.

"We are a lonely people, Doctor," Lysko said. "And being lonely makes us able to see things hidden from you busier ones. With Rose it was not the sickness that brought death — it was death that brought the sickness."

It was too close to the truth for argument. Rose had loved Jason Wilder enough to turn away from her own people and leave everything she had known; it wasn't tuberculosis that killed Rose, it was knowing that Jason wouldn't ever come home.

"It's happened before," I admitted, and took up the black call bag I hadn't even opened. "I'll send somebody up from town to make whatever arrangements are necessary."

Halfway down the crooked road I stopped my car and looked back, but I couldn't make out the cabin against the dark mountainside. Old Lysko hadn't lighted a lamp, and the red glow of coals in the fireplace wasn't strong enough to carry through the wind and darkness.

I remember thinking then that Lysko wouldn't want a light, that he'd rather mourn his dead by firelight, like a thousand generations of gipsy ancestors before him.

THE funeral next day was a quick and cheerless business, conducted in a chill mist of rain by a local Baptist minister who couldn't get his heart into his work

because he half suspected that he might be burying an unsaved heathen. A handful of hill people stood by in rubber boots and rain-coats, some out of simple curiosity and some moved by the feeling that it was their duty as Christians and surviving neighbors of Jason Wilder to be there. Lysko Czernak never said a word or shed a tear, and neither did Josef.

I remember thinking, when the coffin went down, that old Lysko hadn't seemed to hear a word of the minister's hurried droning. His dark face was turned toward the mountains and his long black eyes had the sort of look, dark and proud and full of distance, that you might expect to see in the eyes of a woods-ranging hawk.

I remember thinking too that there was nothing to hold him here any longer, that he'd take his grandson now and go his gipsy way over the hills and across the world again. But I was wrong. Josef was already infected with the same sickness that had taken his mother, and Lysko couldn't leave him.

Between the dates of Rose's funeral and the sticking of the seasons, I went pretty often up to the cabin on Moorehead Mountain, to take medicine to Josef and to talk by the hour with old Lysko. By the time the spring was well begun, my visits had fallen into the routine of habit and I went up regularly one evening out of every

week, even after I knew there was nothing more I could do for the boy.

I had made application for his entrance into the state sanatorium, but nothing came of it. A bad winter fills the beds there, and the waiting list already set up would outlast Josef's need. There was nothing we could do but wait, and to make him as comfortable as possible while his eyes got bigger and his face thinned and his color mounted. Old Lysko put him outside in the cane-backed rocker when the weather warmed up, leaving him in the sun where he could watch the rising green flush of spring in the woods and follow the butterflies and the first winging flocks of honking geese.

The boy idolized Lysko, and the old man looked after him like a slave or a genie. Lysko even opened his brass-cornered trunk, strapped jealously tight before, and spread its contents out for Josef's entertainment. I saw it all at one time or another in Josef's skinny, eager hands, and every piece had its own story.

There was a frayed bit of carpet, soft and bright and strangely woven, that had been made in Turkey no one knew how many hundreds of years before. There was a scimitar from Arabia with nicks in its edge and queer straggling script running down the blade; a tobacco pipe from China with a bowl of

green stone and a polished wooden stem chased with silver. There was a crystal ball that had been made in Brooklyn and a pack of fortune-teller's cards that Lysko had picked up in Rumania, some leather-bound old books in foreign print and a packet of frayed letters tied with tinsel string.

There were beads and bracelets and bangles and all sorts of gaudy gipsy finery, and there was Lysko's fiddle.

In Lysko's hands it was like a live thing, singing gipsy songs that made the boy's black eyes glisten and blink. I used to stop my car on other mountain roads, delaying calls to other patients to listen for the sound of it. I learned that it sang different tunes by day and night, none of them familiar to me, but all of them tingling and lively when Josef was awake.

I could tell from the music when Josef slept. The mood of the fiddle changed then and all the skip and joy went out of it — sometimes it was wild and dark and sometimes it called, crying after something I never had a name for. I could picture old Lysko with his dark cheek laid against the darker wood and his long black eyes brooding over the lost years of wandering and loneliness, and then I'd find myself remembering what he had said about the lonely ones being able to see things hidden

from the busy rest of us.

He was right about that, but it was months before I was sure of it.

It was around the middle of April when I met Lysko on a grocery run in Payson's Falls and he asked me how much longer I thought the boy would live.

"Six months, with luck," I said, and knew that the guess would be close. I'd seen others go the same way; the pattern varies little.

Lysko looked away at the hills, and somehow I had the feeling that he was weighing a decision of importance.

"The summer will have come and gone then with its heat and drought," he said. "And the autumn will be cold here in the hills. But the worst is that the spring will go first . . . Josef loves the spring, with its greenness and its flowering and its birds."

"I know," I said. I had watched the boy waste away while the red-bud trees bloomed through their winter bark and put out their first pointed buds for leafing, and I had seen him staring after the larks and bluebirds and geese on their way north. "But the world spins and the seasons change, Lysko, and the spring moves north and takes the birds with it. The only way to keep them is to be rich enough to follow."

I had never seen Lysko smile before. The flash of his white teeth startled me.

"Of course," he said, and I had the uncomfortable feeling that he was mocking me. "It is easy for us to forget that science is the godchild of logic when we know that truth is older and simpler than either."

I didn't ask what he meant, but left him to finish buying his groceries.

WHEN I went up to Moorehead Mountain that night, the two of them seemed to have worked up some sort of private joke between them. There was a secretive gleam in old Lysko's eye, and Josef, stirred out of his usual solemn quiet, looked as eager as a kid on Christmas Eve.

Lysko was sitting cross-legged on the floor before the fireplace when I came in. He was weaving a pile of thin split-willow slats into something that looked like the framework for a basket, his clever dark hands moving as swift and sure as a tailor sewing a garment, but he got up at once and took his work into the little back room where he slept. He came back and lighted a lamp then, and in checking Josef's temperature I forgot to ask what sort of basket Lysko was making.

Josef was no better, of course, but he was happy and he didn't complain. And what more can a doctor ask of any patient?

I gave old Lysko credit, with

his endless gipsy stories and his violin music and his patient scouring of the woods for fresh mountain flowers, for the boy's cheerfulness. I remember thinking when I first came in that night that Jason Wilder wouldn't have recognized the cabin he was born in; the dark clay-chinked walls were covered with branches of wild pink crabapple and flowering cherry and sprays of redbud blooms, and the air was sweet with the smell of early yellow honeysuckle and aromatic heads of sassafras. There was a Mason jar of wild dwarf iris on the mantelpiece, and on a packing-box table beside Josef's bed, where he could smell the faint clean fragrance of them, stood a handful of woods violets in a bright dime-store vase.

"You see we have spring inside as well as out," old Lysko said, winking a long black eye at Josef. "We love the spring, Josef and I, so we hold it close."

He made coffee for us then, and later in the evening he brought out his fiddle and played strange, leaping gipsy tunes that seemed to match the flickering rhythms of the firelight.

It was nearly midnight when I left. It was still later when I woke up and found myself wondering for no reason at all just what it was that Lysko had been weaving out of split-willow slats and why he hadn't wanted me to see it.



It had an odd shape for a basket with its flat circular bottom and pointed top and its little roughed-out opening that might have been meant for a door. I'd seen thousands of baskets woven up here in the hills, but never one that looked like that.

It looked, I was thinking when I dropped off to sleep again, more like a cage than like anything else.

FOR a couple of weeks after that, I didn't find Lysko at home when I drove up Moorehead Mountain to visit Josef. Josef would be alone, usually asleep, and he couldn't — or wouldn't — tell me where Lysko had gone.

I had reports from other sources, though.

Willard Dunn, who owned a little farm north of town, told me about running across Lysko one Sunday afternoon down near Carroll Creek. The old gipsy was stalking something in a tangle of honeysuckle and chokeberry bushes, Willard said — he swore to that, though he admitted that he never got close enough to see what it was that Lysko was after. I knew why Willard had kept his distance; most of our people up here are superstitious about foreigners, and Willard was plain afraid to interrupt.

It was the same with the three McCaffrey brothers when they met Lysko after midnight in the hills,

all alone and miles from his cabin on Moorehead Mountain. It was a bright moonlit night, they said, bright enough to see that old Lysko was packing a gunnysack on his shoulder and that he was in the devil's own hurry. I didn't ask the McCaffrey boys what *they* were doing in the hills at midnight; the McCaffreys made whisky, and didn't take kindly to questioning.

I'd probably have asked Lysko sooner or later what he was up to, but after his brush with the McCaffreys he stuck close to the cabin and to Josef. It was about that time too that people began to talk about the spring being stuck, and in the excitement I forgot all about the old gipsy's ramblings.

NOBODY could be sure at first that the spring was really stuck, of course, though the old-timers wagged their beards and swore to it. But, when April went out and May came in, the signs were too plain to mistake.

Take the redbud trees, for instance — they usually quit blooming early in May and start putting out their leaves. But this year it was different; they bloomed on and on, along with the wild crab-apples and rock-roses and chokeberries, until May was half gone and the white dogwood trees and the lilacs and azaleas blossomed out to join them. It was enough to take your breath away when you

looked at the hills, especially after the purple laurel came out — the woods were splashed and misted with colors run wild, and you could almost feel the sap rising and the spring stirring warm in the air.

And there were the birds. The red-winged blackbirds and the bluebirds came up from the south in March and April, but the latter ones didn't move on north as usual. They stayed, and the juncos and brown thrashers and pine warblers came up and stayed with them. May brought catbirds and cuckoos and orioles and mockingbirds, and by June there were so many of them around that the hills were never quiet except at night.

But it wasn't only the birds and the blooming things that made us sure the seasons were stuck. It was the farmers, the most practical and hardheaded people on earth, that proved it.

They planted their hill patches in cotton during the early part of May, as always, and when it sprouted up they thinned it and petted it and cursed it the way farmers do. Maybe you know how cotton starts blooming in June, putting out little whiskery squares that open into pink or white or purplish blooms. The flowers fall off after a few weeks and leave little acorn-shaped green bolls, and the bolls grow and dry out and crack open late in the summer to show the white cotton ready for

the farmers to pick it.

But this year the cotton didn't bloom. Cotton is a summertime plant, and it couldn't bloom until the spring was gone and summer came in.

And summer couldn't come because the spring was stuck.

WE kept our opinions to ourselves, being a pretty clanish lot up here, so it wasn't until along in July that the news leaked out and got into the papers. The columnists and radio commentators took to the idea the way they took to flying saucer jokes, and had a high time with the story until around the first of August, when one of the big papers down in Atlanta sent a man up to settle the rumor. What he telephoned back to his editors changed the tune in a hurry.

That was when the newspapermen and the Weather Bureau investigators began to swarm into our hills, poking around everywhere and asking questions and making tests. They made such nuisances of themselves that we dodged them on sight, and the McCaffrey boys had to tear down their still and haul it away to keep out of jail.

Even the United States Department of Agriculture men couldn't find out what was wrong, but they turned up some mighty interesting information. They dug up a bunch

of mountain shrubs, for instance, and sent them outside to see how they'd behave in a different locality, and the shrubs quit flowering and put out fruit almost overnight. They trapped migratory birds and took them away from the area where the spring was stuck, and as soon as they were let loose the birds headed north in an amazing hurry.

So it was plain that it wasn't our Marble County flora and fauna that had gone wild, but the climate. The seasons changed everywhere else in the world, but in Marble County it was spring.

It stayed spring until the middle of November. The newspapermen and Weather Bureau agents and Department of Agriculture investigators wore themselves to a frazzle looking for the reason behind it, but they never found it because they didn't go to the right source.

I did. I visited that source at least once a week for seven months, but I didn't guess at the truth until our over-long spring was on its way out.

IT was strange during that last month of autumn, when the leaves should have been red and gold and brown instead of green, to drive over the rutted mountain roads at night with the yellow dust of pine pollen sifting down through the moonlight and the dogwood trees blooming like white lakes

of mist against the slopes. It gets cold early here in the hills — a couple of other counties adjoining Marble had already felt their first hard frosts, and the heady smell of honey suckle and sassafras on our own warm spring air made everything seem like a dream when you put your mind to thinking about it.

It was easier not to think about it. Most of us around Payson's Falls accepted it as a fact and left the reporters and government men to worry about it. If it was a miracle, it was a comfortable one, and where was the point in prying around and asking fool questions that nobody could answer?

Along toward the last I took to visiting Josef twice a week, and found him weaker every trip. His black eyes got brighter and the flush on his cheeks got redder. When I counted his pulse, his wrist was as thin and limber as a willow switch. But he was happier with old Lysko and his birds and flowers than I'd ever thought anyone could be.

It was my duty as a doctor to keep him alive as long as possible, but my heart wasn't in it. What difference did it make how early in life a person died, I wondered, if his last days could be as happy as Josef's?

Lysko stuck with the boy day and night now, propping him up at the front window for a few min-

utes every morning and afternoon where he could see the sun on the hills, pointing out the birds by name and telling extravagant gipsy stories that made Josef's eyes glisten. Of nights old Lysko would build up the fire in the big stone fireplace, punishing himself with the heat needed to keep the boy's thin body warm, and play his violin.

On my last regular visit I asked Lysko how he managed to stand up under the strain, and I remember the answer he gave me: "Because I must, Doctor. Josef is the last of my blood, and what is an old man's life when his line is gone?"

It was that night, when Josef was sleeping and Lysko sat exhausted with his fiddle across his knees and his eyes on the coals, that I first heard the stirring in the little back room where the old man slept. It sounded like a bird fluttering on a cramped perch, shifting position in its sleep and twittering drowsily at the interruption of its rest.

I went toward the back room to see what it was, thinking that a wild bird must have come in somehow during the day and lost itself in the unfamiliar indoors. But Lysko was there ahead of me, blocking the way.

"It is nothing," he said, answering the question I hadn't asked. "A pet. A woods bird I

trapped to amuse the boy."

I didn't argue. I went home and to sleep, but I couldn't have been in bed for more than an hour or two before Lysko came and roused me out for the second time.

I didn't ask what was wrong when I let him in. His face and the long, empty black eyes of him told me that. He spoke only once, when I took up my black call bag to go.

"You will not need medicines tonight, Doctor," he said.

He was right. I took the bag anyway, but I didn't need it.

Josef was dead when we reached the cabin on Moorehead Mountain. He looked exactly as Rose had looked, calm and pale and peaceful and so comfortable that I was downright glad it was all over, until I remembered that he, like his mother before him, had died alone while Lysko came for me.

"You should have come earlier, Lysko," I said. I may have sounded a little sharp. "How could you leave the boy alone when you knew he'd be dead before you got back?"

Lysko was standing in the cabin doorway with his back toward me, looking out over the hills into the night sky. I thought at first that he hadn't heard me.

"There is an old song still sung by my people in Rumania," he said, "that has meaning to the lonely but not to others. It has a

refrain that ends so: *The flowers fear the hoar-frost. None save the stars see the flowers die by night.*"

It wasn't properly a song at all but a slow sort of chant in a minor key. The lines didn't quite make sense to me, but I could feel that they meant a lot to Lysko.

He stood there a minute or two longer, studying the stars that winked back over the pine hills, and in the soft spring silence I heard the bird-sound again from the back room. It was a plaintive sort of sound — not loud or angry or protesting, just restless.

"All right, Lysko," I said. "Your ways are your own. I'll send someone up in the morning to take over."

He nodded and stood aside to let me out. I went home and to bed again, not realizing how much the boy's death had upset me until I got up next morning and found that I had left my call bag at the cabin.

EXCEPT for the weather, Josef's funeral was exactly like his mother's. The same handful of hill people stood around the raw, red-clay grave. The weather made a difference, of course; Rose had been buried in a driving February rain, and it was spring now.

It was the middle of November, but it was still spring.

The air was warm and sweet with the smell of wisteria vines

blooming on the church arbor, and when the minister stopped his droning there was a minute or two of quiet when you could hear the bluejays and mockingbirds in the woods. Josef's little box was piled high with pink wild crab-apple and white dogwood blossoms, and the bonneted hill women standing by carried armfuls of mountain azalea and purple laurel and woods violets and iris.

Lysko didn't watch the box go down. He was looking over the pine slopes toward the south with his dark wood-hawk's ranging look, and I remember thinking for the second time that there was nothing left any longer to tie him to Payson's Falls and Marble County, that he'd load his old brass-cornered trunk into his car and go his gipsy way over the hills and across the world.

This time I was right. Lysko left Payson's Falls that same day, just before dark.

HE was stowing the last of his traps into the Ford when I drove up to the cabin to get my bag. He looked different, now that he was ready for the road — he had tied a bright bandanna around his throat over the open shirt collar, and a dull-gold earring made of some foreign coin dangled from his pierced left ear. All the gentleness had gone out of him, and he looked more than ever like a dark

old bird getting ready to fly away.

"I've come for my bag, Lysko."

He went into the cabin with me. The call bag was lying on the packing-box table that had stood beside Josef's bed; I picked it up and turned to go, and it was then that I saw the door to Lysko's back room standing open.

The split-willow cage that Lysko had made seven months ago was hanging from a rafter, and there was a bird inside it.

The late afternoon sun flooding through the window made the seasoned white slats of the cage shine so that it was hard to see what kind of bird it was, but it had a familiar look that reminded me somehow of every other bird I ever saw. It was trilling softly to itself, an old, old song I'd heard all my life in the woods and fields without ever once seeing the singer that made it.

Lysko took the cage outside and opened its cunningly woven door.

"The world is a stranger and simpler place than you busy ones think, Doctor," he said. "You said once that it is the spring that

brings the birds, but you were wrong. Sometimes your logic reverses the seeming of truth."

It perched for a moment in the open cage door, turning its head and flirting its tail like any other bird.

Then it flew out and up, circled once and headed due south.

Lysko got into his old Ford without saying good-by and drove away down the mountain road, leaving me standing there with my call bag in my hand. I didn't watch him go—I was straining my eyes after the vanishing dot of the springbird and wondering if that stir I felt breathing through the pine hills was a real thing or only in my imagination.

It must have been real, because before the sun went down all the flowers had wilted and every migratory bird that had lingered through Marble County's seven-month spring had flown south.

By morning it was snowing.



Bunions are reliable forecasters of rain or snow. Old wives' herb brews consisted of foxglove, which contains digitalis, for heart disease, carrots for what we now recognize as vitamin deficiency, and other natural sources of medicines still very much in use. Peruvian Indians took chinchona bark for malaria; we derive quinine from that tree. Swallows flying low indicate bad weather—we can explain it in terms of the effect of barometric pressure on insects that swallows feed upon.

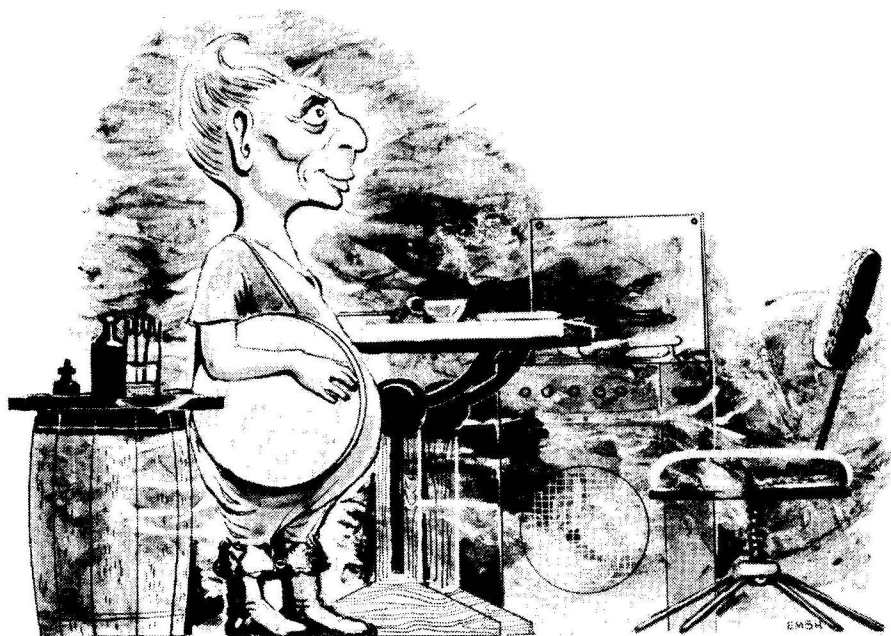
How many other "superstitions" will prove to be true? That depends on science . . . which has had to advance in order to catch up with antiquity.

BABEL II

By DAMON KNIGHT

*The world never got over the first time
it happened . . . and here it is again!*

Illustrated by EMSH



He stood just under four feet tall, big head, crest and all. He had a wrinkled violet-gray skin, curious S-whorled ears, and a Tweedle-dum tummy; he was dressed in an electric-blue jacket and small clothes of some crinkly material that glittered when he moved, with jackboots on his stubby legs and a white-metal disk, a quarter as big

as he was, slung by a baldrick from one narrow shoulder.

Lloyd Cavanaugh saw the apparition first, at eleven o'clock on a Wednesday morning in May, in the living room of his studio apartment on East 50th Street in Manhattan. It stepped into view, seemingly, from behind the drawing table at the far end of the room.



Which was nonsense. The drawing table, with its top horizontal and the breakfast dishes still on it, was shoved back against the closed drapes of the window. On the right, between the table and the record cabinet, there was about six inches' clearance; on the left, between the table and the keg he kept his ink and brushes on, even less.

Cavanaugh, a bad-tempered young man with a long morose face casually connected to a knobby, loose-jointed body, scowled across the pool of brilliance on the model table and said, "What the hell?" He switched off the floods and turned on the room lights.

Suddenly illuminated, the Hooligan-thing blazed at him like a Christmas tree ornament. Its eyes blinked rapidly; then the long upper lip curled up in an astonishing crescent-shaped bucktoothed smile. It made a sound like "*Khakh-ptui!*" and nodded its head several times.

CAVANAUGH'S first thought was for the Hasselblad. He picked it up, tripod and all, carried it crabwise backward to safety behind the armchair, then crossed the room and took a poker out of the fireplace rack. Gripping this weapon, he advanced on the Hooligan.

The thing came to meet him, grinning and nodding. When they were two strides apart it stopped,

bowed jerkily, and lifted the white disk at the end of the baldrick, holding it at the top, with one of the flat sides toward Cavanaugh.

A picture formed in the disk.

In stereo and full color, it showed a ten-inch Cavanaugh bending over something on a tripod. The hands moved swiftly, fitting pieces together; then the figure stepped back and stared with evident approval at an oblong box-shape at the top of the tripod, with a chromed cylinder projecting from the front of it. The Hasselblad.

Cavanaugh lowered the poker. Jaw unhinged, he stared at the disk, which was now blank, then at the Hooligan's violet face and the silvery growth above it, which was neither hair nor feathers, but something in between . . . "How did you do that?" he demanded.

"Szu szat," said the Hooligan alertly. He jiggled the disk at Cavanaugh, pointed to his head, then to the disk, then to Cavanaugh's head, then to the disk again. Then he held the thing out at arm's length, cocking his head to one side.

Cavanaugh took the disk gingerly. Gooseflesh was prickling along his arms. "You want to know if I made the camera?" he said tentatively. "Is that it?"

"Szat it," said the Hooligan. He bowed again, nodded twice, and opened his eyes very wide.

Cavanaugh reflected. Staring at the disk, he imagined an enormous

machine with a great many drive belts and moving parts, all whirling furiously. There it was, a little blurred, but not bad. He put a hopper on one side of it, made a man walk up and pour in a bucketful of scrap metal, and then showed a stream of cameras coming out the other side.

THE Hooligan, who had been peering intently at the other side of the disk, straightened up and took the disk back with another bow. Then he whirled around rapidly three times, holding his nose with one hand and making violent gestures with the other.

Cavanaugh fell back a step, gripping his poker more firmly.

The Hooligan darted past him, moving so fast his legs twinkled, and fetched up with his chin on the edge of the model table, staring at the setup in the middle of the tabletop.

"Hey!" said Cavanaugh angrily, and followed him. The Hooligan turned and held out the disk again. Another picture formed: Cavanaugh bending over the table, this time, putting tiny figures together and arranging them in front of a painted backdrop.

. . . Which was substantially what had happened. Cavanaugh was, by profession, a comic-book artist. He was indifferent to the work itself; it was automatic; it paid him well; but it had ruined

him as a draftsman. He couldn't draw, paint, or etch for fun any more. So he had taken up photography — specifically, tabletop photography.

He built his models out of clay and papier-mâché and wire and beads and bits of wood and a thousand other things; he painted or dyed them, composed them, lighted them—and then, with the Hasselblad and a special, very expensive shallow-focus lens, he photographed them. The results, after the first year, had begun to be surprising.

The setup on the table now was a deceptively simple one. Background and middle distance were a tangle of fir and mountain laurel, scaled half an inch to a foot. In the foreground were three figures grouped around the remains of a campfire. They were not human; they were attenuated gray hairless creatures with big mild eyes, dressed in oddly cut hiking clothes.

Two, with their backs to a block of crumbling masonry half-sunken in the ground, were leaning together over a sheet of paper unrolled from a metal cylinder. The third was seated on a stone, nearer the camera, with a shank of meat in its hand. The shape of the half-gnawed bones was disturbingly familiar; and when you looked more closely you would begin to wonder if those projections at the end could be fingers, all but concealed by the eater's hand. As a matter of

fact, they were; but no matter how long you looked at the photograph you would never be quite sure.

The Hooligan was thrusting the disk at him again, grinning and winking and teetering on his heels. Cavanaugh, suppressing annoyance in favor of curiosity, accepted it and ran through the same sequence the Hooligan had shown him.

"That's right," he said. "I made it. So what?"

"Szo khvat!" The Hooligan's hand made a gesture, too swift to follow, and suddenly contained what looked like a large fruit, like a purple pear with warts. Seeing Cavanaugh's uncomprehending expression, he put it back wherever it had come from and produced a wadded mass of translucent pink threads. Cavanaugh scowled irritably. "Look—" he began.

The Hooligan tried again. This time he came up with a brilliant, faceted white stone about the size of a cherry.

Cavanaugh felt his eyes bulging. If that was a diamond—

"Khoi-ptool!" said the Hooligan emphatically. He pointed to the stone and to Cavanaugh, then to himself and the model setup. His meaning was clear: he wanted to trade.

IT was a diamond, all right; at least, it scribed a neat line in the glass of an empty beer bottle.

It was also brilliant, pure white, and so far as Cavanaugh could tell, flawless. He put it on his postage scale; it weighed a little less than an ounce. Say twenty grams, and a carat was two hundred milligrams . . . It worked out to a preposterous one hundred carats, a little less than the Hope diamond in its prime.

He stared at the thing suspiciously. There *had* to be a catch in it, but with the best will in the world he couldn't see any. The models were a means to an end; once he was finished with them, they simply took up room. So what could he lose?

The Hooligan was gazing at him, owl-eyed. Cavanaugh picked up the disk and gave him his answer: a series of pictures that showed Cavanaugh photographing the models, processing the film, and then ceremoniously accepting the diamond and handing the models over.

The Hooligan bowed repeatedly, capered, stood briefly on his hands, and patted Cavanaugh's sleeve, grinning. Taking this for consent, Cavanaugh put the Hasselblad back in place, turned on the floods, and began where he had left off. He took half a dozen color shots, then reloaded with black-and-white film and took half a dozen more.

The Hooligan watched everything with quivering attention. He

followed Cavanaugh into the dark-room and goggled over the edge of the workbench while Cavanaugh developed the black-and-white film, fixed it, washed and dried it, cut it apart and printed it.

And as soon as the first print came out of the frame, the Hooligan made urgent gestures and held out another diamond, about half the size of the first. He wanted the prints, too!

Sweating, Cavanaugh dug into his files and brought up color prints and transparencies of his other work: the Hansel and Gretel series, Cavor and the Grand Lunar, Walpurgisnacht, Gulliver extinguishing the palace fire in Lilliput, the Head of the N. I. C. E. The Hooligan bought them all. As each bargain was struck, he picked up his purchase and put it away wherever it was that he got the diamonds. Cavanaugh watched him closely, but couldn't figure out where they went.

For that matter, where had the Hooligan come from?

ASSURED that Cavanaugh had no more pictures, the Hooligan was darting around the room, peering into corners, bending to look into bookshelves, standing on tiptoe to see what was on the mantelpiece. He pointed at a five-inch wooden figurine, a squatting hatchet-faced man-shape with its arms crossed, elbows on knees—an

Ifugao carving that Cavanaugh had brought home from the Philippines. In the disk, a copy of the Goldberg machine Cavanaugh had used, to explain cameras, appeared for an instant. The Hooligan cocked his head at him.

"No," said Cavanaugh. "Hand-made." He took the disk and gave the Hooligan a view of a brown-skinned man gouging splinters out of a block of mahogany. Then, for kicks, he made the man shrink to a dot on an island on a globe that slowly turned, with Asia and Australia vanishing around one limb while the Americas rolled into sight from the other. He made a red dot for New York, and pointed at himself.

"Khrrrtz," said the Hooligan thoughtfully. He turned away from the Ifugao and pointed to a bright diamond-patterned rug that hung on the wall over the couch. "Khand-mate?"

Cavanaugh, who had just made up his mind to give up the Ifugao for another diamond, was nonplussed. "Wait a minute," he said, and made another moving picture in the disk: himself handing over the Ifugao for the standard emolument.

The Hooligan leaped back, ears flapping, crest aquiver. Recovering somewhat, he advanced again and showed Cavanaugh a revised version: the Hooligan receiving a wood carving from, and handing a

diamond to, the brown-skinned man Cavanaugh had pictured as its creator.

"Khand-mate?" he said again, pointing to the rug.

Somewhat sourly, Cavanaugh showed him the rug being woven by a straw-hatted Mexican. Still more sourly, he answered the Hooligan's pictographed "Where?" with a map of Mexico; and more sourly still, he identified and located the artists responsible for a Swedish silver pitcher, a Malay kris, an Indian brass hubble-bubble, and a pair of loafers hand-cobbled in Greenwich Village.

The Hooligan, it appeared, bought only at the source.

At any rate, if he wasn't going to get any more diamonds, he could get some information. Cavanaugh took the disk and projected a view of the Hooligan popping into sight and moving forward across the room. Then he ran it backward and looked inquiringly at the Hooligan.

For answer, he got a picture of a twilight depthless space where crested little creatures like the Hooligan walked among tall fungoid growths that looked like tiers of doughnuts-on-a-stick. Another planet? Cavanaugh touched the disk and made the viewpoint tilt upward; the Hooligan obligingly filled in more of the featureless violet haze. No sun, no moon, no stars.

Cavanaugh tried again: a picture of himself, standing on the globe of the Earth, and peering at the night sky. Suddenly a tiny Hooligan-figure appeared, uncomfortably perched on a star.

The Hooligan countered with a picture that left Cavanaugh more confused than before. There were two globes, swinging in emptiness. One was solid looking, and standing on it was a tiny man-shape; the other was violet mist, with the tubby, crested figure of a Hooligan inside it. The two spheres revolved very slowly around each other, coming a little nearer with each circuit, while the solid globe flickered light-dark, light-dark. Eventually they touched, clung, and the Hooligan-figure darted across. The solid globe flickered once more, the Hooligan shot back to the misty one, and the spheres separated, moving very gradually apart as they circled.

Cavanaugh gave up.

THE Hooligan, after waiting a moment to be sure that Cavanaugh had no more questions, made his deepest bow to date and conjured up a final diamond: a beauty, larger than all but one or two that Cavanaugh already had.

Picture of Cavanaugh accepting the diamond and handing over something blurred: *What for?*

Picture of the Hooligan rejecting the blur: *For nothing.* Picture

of the Hooligan patting Cavanaugh's sleeve: *For friendship.*

Feeling ashamed of himself, Cavanaugh got a bottle of May wine and two glasses out of the bookshelf. He explained to the Hooligan, via the disk, what the stuff was and—sketchily—what it was supposed to do to you.

This was a mistake.

The Hooligan, beaming enormously between sips, drank the wine with every sign of enjoyment. Then, with an impressive flourish, he put a smallish green and white doodad on the table. It had a green crystalline base with a slender knob-tipped metal shaft sprouting upright from the center of it. That was all.

Feeling abnormally open-minded and expectant, Cavanaugh studied the Hooligan's pictograph explanation. The gadget, apparently, was the Hooligan equivalent of alcoholic beverages. (Picture of Cavanaugh and the Hooligan, with enormous smiles on their faces, while colored lights flashed on and off inside their transparent skulls.) He nodded when the little man glanced at him for permission. With one thick finger, the Hooligan carefully tapped the doodad's projecting knob. Knob and shaft vibrated rapidly.

Cavanaugh had the odd sensation that someone was stirring his brains with a swizzle stick. It tickled. It was invigorating. It was

delightful. "Ha!" he said.

"Kho!" said the Hooligan, grinning happily. He picked up the doodad, put it away—Cavanaugh almost saw where it went—and stood up. Cavanaugh accompanied him to the door. He patted Cavanaugh's sleeve; Cavanaugh pumped his hand. Then, cheerfully bouncing three steps at a time, he disappeared down the stairwell.

From the window, a few minutes later, Cavanaugh saw him riding by—atop a Second Avenue bus.

II

THE euphoric feeling diminished after a few minutes, leaving Cavanaugh in a relaxed but bewildered state of mind. To reassure himself, he emptied his bulging trousers pockets onto the table. Diamonds—solid, cool, sharp-edged, glowingly beautiful. He counted them; there were twenty-seven, ranging from over a hundred carats to about thirty; worth, altogether—how much?

Steady, he warned himself. *There may be a catch in it yet.* The thing to do was to get downtown to an appraiser's and find out. Conveniently, he knew where there was one—in the French Building, across the hall from Patriotic Comics. He picked out two of the stones, a big one and a little one, and zipped them into the inner compartment of his wallet. Jit-

tering a little with excitement, he dumped the rest into a paper bag and hid them under the kitchen sink.

A yellow cab was cruising down the avenue. Cavanaugh hailed it and got in. "Forty-fifth and Fifth," he said.

"Boo?" said the driver, twisting to look at him.

Cavanaugh glowered. "Forty-fifth Street," he said distinctly, "and Fifth Avenue. Let's go."

"Zawss," said the driver, pushing his cap up, "owuh kelg trace wooj'l, fook. Bnog nood ig ye nolik?"

Cavanaugh got out of the cab. "Pokuth *chowig'w!*" said the driver, and zoomed away, grinding his gears.

Jaw unhinged, Cavanaugh stared after him. He felt his ears getting hot. "Why didn't I get his license number?" he said aloud. "Why didn't I stay upstairs where it was safe? Why do I live in this idiotic goddam city?"

He stepped back onto the sidewalk. "Lowly, badny?" said a voice in his ear.

Cavanaugh whirled. It was an urchin with a newspaper in his hand, a stack of them under his arm. "Will you kindly mind your own business?" Cavanaugh said. He turned, took two steps toward the corner, then froze, faced around again, and marched back.

It was as he had thought: the

headline of the paper in the boy's hand read, MOTN LNIUL IMAP QYFRAT.

The name of the paper, which otherwise looked like the *News*, was *Pionu Vajl*.

The newsboy was backing away from him, with a wary look in his eyes.

"**W**AIT," said Cavanaugh hastily. He clutched in his pocket for change, found none, and got a bill out of his wallet with trembling fingers. He thrust it at the child. "I'll take a paper."

The boy took the bill, glanced at it, threw it on the pavement at Cavanaugh's feet, and ran like sixty.

Cavanaugh picked up the bill. In each corner of it was a large figure 4. Over the familiar engraving of G. Washington were the words, FRA EVOFAP LFIFAL YK IQATOZI. Under it, the legend read, YVA PYNNIT.

He clutched his collar, which was throttling him. That vibrating gadget—? But that couldn't be it; it was the world that was scrambled, not Cavanaugh. And *that* was impossible, because—

A dirty little man in a derby rushed at him, grabbing for his lapels. "Poz'k," he gabbled, "fend gihekn, fend gihekn? Fwuz eeb l' mwukd sahtz'kn?"

Cavanaugh pushed him away and retreated.

The little man burst into tears. "FWUH!" he wailed. "Fwuh vekn r' NAHP shao?"

Cavanaugh stopped thinking. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw that a crosstown bus had just pulled up down at the end of the block. He ran for it.

The red-faced driver was half out of his seat, bellowing gibberish at a fat woman who was shrieking back at him, brandishing a dangerous parasol. Beyond them the narrow aisle was packed full of bewildered faces, annoyed faces, shouting faces. The air bristled with dislocated consonants.

Farther down, somebody shrieked and hammered on the rear door. Cursing, the driver turned around to open it. The fat woman seized this opportunity to clout him on the head, and when the resulting melee was over, Cavanaugh found himself halfway down the bus, well wedged in, without having paid his fare.

The bus moved. Hysterical passengers got off at every stop, but the ones that crowded on were in no better shape. Nobody, Cavanaugh realized numbly, could understand anybody; nobody could read anything written.

The din was increasing; Cavanaugh could hear the driver's bellowing voice getting steadily hoarser and weaker. Up ahead, horns were blowing furiously. Concentrating with the greatest diffi-

culty, he managed: *How far?* That was the crucial point—had whatever it was—happened simultaneously all over New York . . . or all over the world? Or, horrid thought, was it a sort of infection that he was carrying with him?

He had to find out.

The traffic got thicker. At Sixth Avenue the bus, which had been moving by inches, stopped altogether and the doors slammed open. Peering forward, Cavanaugh saw the driver climb down, hurl his uniform cap to the street and disappear, shoulders hunched, into the crowd.

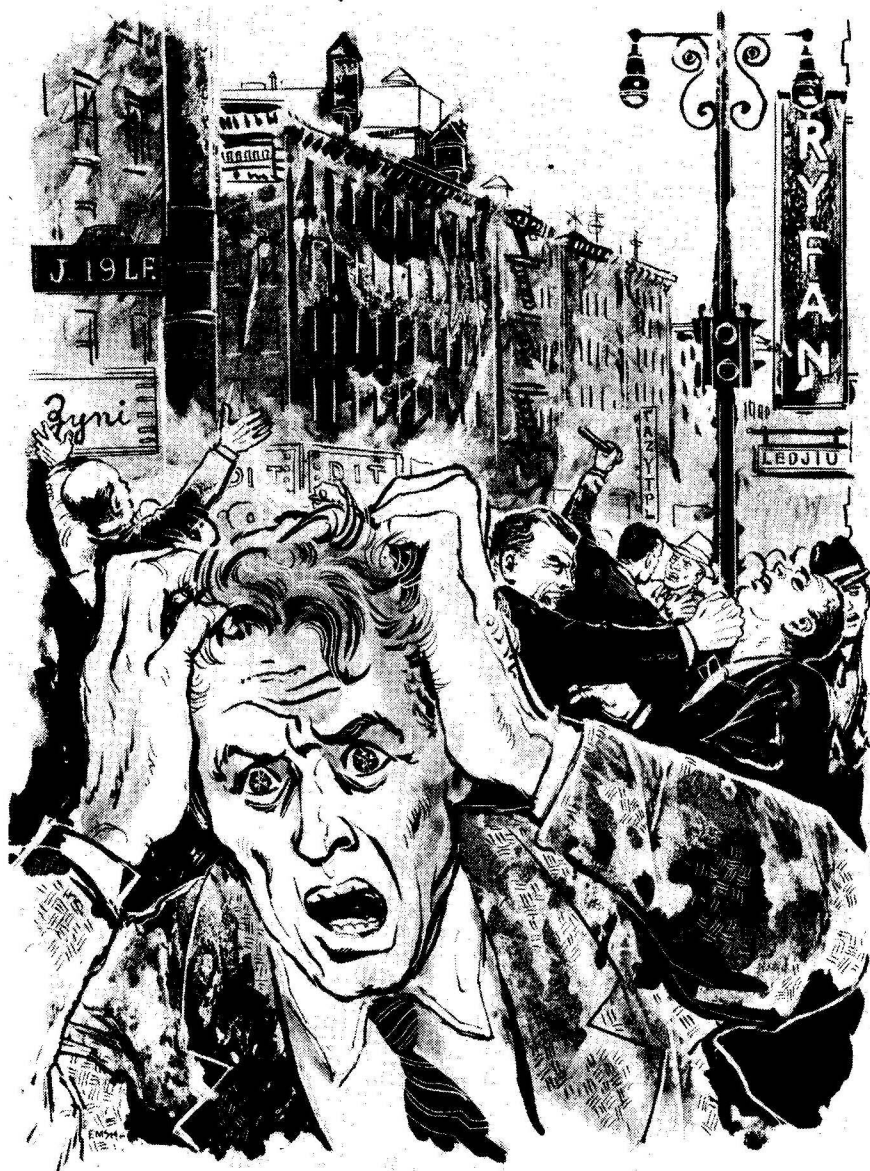
CAVANAUGH got out and walked west into Bedlam. Auto horns were howling, sirens shrieking; there was a fight every fifteen yards and a cop for every tenth fight. After a while it became obvious that he would never get to Broadway; he battled his way back to Sixth and turned south.

The loudspeaker over a record store was blaring a song Cavanaugh knew and detested; but instead of the all-too-familiar words, the raucous female voice was chanting:

*"Kee-ee tho-iv i-if zegmlit
Podn mawgeth oo-oogua-
atch . . ."*

It sounded just as good.

The street sign directly ahead of him read, 13FR. LF. Even the numbers were cockeyed.



Cavanaugh's head hurt. He went into a bar.

It was well patronized. Nobody in a white coat was in evidence, but about a third of the customers were behind the bar, serving the rest—a bottle at a time.

Cavanaugh elbowed his way into the first tier and hesitated between two bottles labeled respectively CIF 05 and ZITLFIO TL. Neither sounded particularly appetizing, but the amber liquid in each looked to be what he needed. He settled for the Zitlfiotl. After his second swallow, feeling more alert, he scanned the backbar and located a radio.

It was, he found when he reached it, already turned on, but nothing was coming out but a power hum. He twiddled with the knobs. At the right of the dial—which was eccentrically numbered from 77 to 408—he picked up an orchestra playing *Pictures at an Exhibition*; otherwise, nothing.

That, he decided, settled it. WQXR, with an all-music program, was on the air; the others were off. That meant that speech was coming out double-talk, not only in New York and New Jersey broadcasts, but in network programs from the west coast. Or—wait a minute—even if a radio performer in Hollywood were able to speak straight English, wouldn't it be nonsense to an engineer in Manhattan?

THIS led him by easy stages to the next problem. Selecting an unfrequented table in the rear, and carrying his Zitlfiotl with him, he seated himself with circumspection and carefully laid out on the table the following important articles:

A partially used envelope.

A fountain pen.

A one-dollar bill.

His social-security card.

A salvaged newspaper.

Now: the question was, did any order remain in the patterns of human speech, or was all reduced to utter chaos? Scientific method, encouraged by Zitlfiotl, would discover the answer.

As a preliminary gambit, he wrote the letters of the alphabet, in a severely vertical line, on the unused surface of the envelope.

Next, after reflection, he copied down the text of the one-dollar bill. Thusly:

FRA EVOFAP LFIFAL YK IQATOZI
YVA PYNNIT

Under each line, letter by letter, he added what *ought* to be the text of the one-dollar bill.

This gave him fifteen letters, which he wrote down in their proper places opposite the already-established letters of the alphabet. Following the identical procedure with the *Pionu Vajl*, or *Daily News*, and, with his own signature, which appeared on the card as *Nnyup Zicivymr*, gave him four letters more, with the result:

| | | | |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| A E | H | O I | V N |
| B | I A | P D | W |
| C V | J W | Q M | X |
| D | K F | R H | Y O |
| E U | L S | S | Z C |
| F T | M G | T R | |
| G | N L | U Y | |

Now came the supreme test. He copied down the *Vajl's* puzzling headline and transliterated it according to his findings:

MOTN LNIUL
GIRL SLAYS
IMAP QYFRAT
AGED MOTHER

A triumphant success. He could now communicate.

The point is, he told himself lucidly, when I think I am saying "Listen to me," in actuality I am saying "Nolfav fy qa," and this is why nobody understands each other. And therefore, if I were to think I am saying "Nolfav fy qa," I would actually be saying "Listen to me." And in this way will we build the Revolution.

But it didn't work.

SOME time later he found himself in a disused classroom with an unruly student body consisting of three men with spectacles and beards and a woman with hair in her eyes; he was attempting to teach them by means of black-board exercises a new alphabet which began E, blank, V, blank, U, T, blank. The blanks, he explained, were most important.

At a later period he was standing on the first landing of the left-hand staircase in the lobby of the Forty-Second Street Branch of the New York Public Library, shouting to an assembled crowd, over and over:

"Myp-piqvap opoyfl! Myp-piqvap opoyfl!"

And at a still later time he woke up, cold sober, leaning on an imitation-marble-topped table in a partially wrecked cafeteria. Sunlight was slanting through the plate glass onto the wall to his left; it must be either late afternoon or early morning.

Cavanaugh groaned. He had gone into that bar, he remembered, because his head hurt: about like taking a mickey finn for nausea.

And as for the rest of it—before and after . . . how much of that had he imagined?

He raised his head and stared hopefully at the lettering on the windows. Even back-to-front he could tell that it wasn't in English. The first letter was a Z.

He groaned again and propped his chin up with his hands, carefully, so as not to slosh. He tried to stay that way, not moving, not looking, not noticing, but eventually an insistent thought brought him upright again.

How long?

How long was this going to last? How long—could it last before the whole world went to hell in a

hand-basket? Not very long.

Without language, how could you buy anything, sell anything, order anything? And if you could, what would you use for money—four-dollar bills marked YVA PYNNIT?

. . . Or, he amended bitterly, something equally outlandish. Because that was the point he had overlooked a few drunken hours ago—everybody's alphabet was different. To Cavanaugh, YVA PYNNIT. To somebody else, AGU MATTEK, OR ENY ZEBBAL, or—

Twenty-six letters in the alphabet. Possible combinations, $26 \times 25 \times 24 \times 23 \times 22$ and so on down to $\times 1$. . . figure roughly one decimal place for each operation . . .

Something in the *septillions*.

NOT as many if vowels were traded for vowels, consonants for consonants, as seemed to have happened in his case, but still plenty. More than the number of people alive in the world.

That was for the written word. For speech, he realized suddenly, it would be just about twenty-five decimal places worse. Not letters, phonemes—forty of them in ordinary spoken English.

A swizzle stick that stirred up your brains—that switched the reflex arcs around at random, connecting the receptor pattern for *K* with the response pattern for *H*,

or *D*, or anything . . .

Cavanaugh traced a letter with his forefinger on the tabletop, frowning at it. Hadn't he always made an *A* like that—a vertical stroke and three horizontal ones?

But, damn it, that was the fiendish thing about it—memory didn't mean a thing, because all the memories were still there but they were scrambled. As if you had ripped out all the connections in a telephone switchboard and put them back differently.

Of course; it *had* to be that way—nobody had gone around repainting all the signs or reprinting all the newspapers or forging a phony signature on Cavanaugh's social-security card. That half-circle first letter of his name, even though it looked like a *z* to him, was still a *C*.

Or was it? If a tree falls with nobody to hear it, is there a sound? And if beauty is in the eye of the beholder, then which way is up? Or rather, thought Cavanaugh, repressing a tendency toward hysteria, *which way is out?*

First things first.

The Hooligan.

He came from some place that wasn't exactly a place, across a distance that wasn't exactly a distance. But it must be a difficult journey, because there was no record of any previous appearances of little cockatoo-crested art collectors . . .

He bought the local handicrafts with stones that were priceless on this planet, and very likely dirt-common where he came from. Pretty beads for the natives. In politeness, you offered him a drink. And being polite right back at you, he gave you a shot of swizzle-sticks-in-the-head.

Firewater. A mild stimulant to the Hooligan, hell on wheels to the aborigines. Instead of getting two people mildly confused, it turned a whole planet pole over equator . . . and, communicating by pictures as he did, it was probable that the Hooligan *still* didn't know what damage he had done. He would finish his tour and go happily back home with his prizes, and then a few thousand years from now, maybe, when the human race had put itself together again into half-acre nations and two-for-a-nickel empires, another Hooligan would come along—

Cavanaugh upset his chair.

Icicles were forming along his spine.

This wasn't the first time. It had happened at least once before, a few thousand years ago, in the valley of the Euphrates.

Not Bedlam—Babel.

III

THE sun was quartering down toward the west, gilding a deserted 42nd Street with the heart-

breaking false promise of spring in New York. Leaning dizzily against the door frame, Cavanaugh saw broken display windows and dark interiors. He heard a confused roaring from somewhere uptown, but the few people who passed him were silent, bewildered.

There was a nasty wreck at the corner of 7th Avenue, and another at 8th; that accounted, he saw with relief, for the lack of traffic in this block. Holding the top of his head down with one hand, he scuttled across the street and dived into the black maw of the IRT subway.

The arcade and the station itself were empty, echoing. Nobody behind the newsstands, nobody playing the pinball machines, nobody in the change booth. Swallowing hard, Cavanaugh went through the open gate and clattered down the stairs to the downtown platform.

A train was standing in the express lane, doors open, lights burning, motor chuffing quietly. Cavanaugh ran down to the first car and went across the vestibule to the motorman's cubicle.

The steering lever was missing.

Cursing, Cavanaugh climbed back to the street. He had to find the Hooligan; he had one chance in a million of doing it, and one wasted minute now might be the one minute that mattered.

The little man could be any-

where on the planet by now. But he'd expressed interest in objects in Cavanaugh's apartment that came variously from the Philippines, Mexico, Malaya, Sweden, India—and Greenwich Village. If, improbably, he hadn't got around to the Village yet, then Cavanaugh might be able to catch him there; it was the only hope he had.

On 8th Avenue south of 41st, he came upon a yellow cab parked at the curb. The driver was leaning against the wall under a Zyzizyni sign, talking to himself, with gestures.

Cavanaugh clutched him by the sleeve and made urgent motions southward. The driver looked at him vaguely, cleared his throat, moved two feet farther down the wall and resumed his interrupted discourse.

Fuming, Cavanaugh hesitated for a moment, then fumbled in his pockets for pen and paper. He found the envelope with his world-saving alphabet on it, tore it open to get a blank space, and sketched rapidly:



The driver looked at it boredly,

then with a faint gleam of intelligence. Cavanaugh pointed to the first picture and looked at him interrogatively.

"Oweh?" said the driver.

"That's right," said Cavanaugh, nodding violently. "Now the next—"

The driver hesitated. "Mtshell?"

That couldn't be right, with a consonant at the end of it. Cavanaugh shook his head and pointed to the blacked-in circle.

"Vcode," said the driver.

Cavanaugh moved his finger to the white circle.

"Mah."

"Right!" said Cavanaugh.

"Oweh mah—" He pointed to the third picture.

That was the tough one; the driver couldn't get it. "Vnakjaw?" he hazarded.

Not enough syllables. Cavanaugh shook his head and passed on to the fourth picture.

"Vozyetch."

Cavanaugh nodded, and they started through the sequence again.

"Oweh—mah—vbzyetch." A look of enlightenment spread over the driver's face. "*Jickagl! Jickagl Vbzyetch!*"

"You've got it," Cavanaugh told him. "Sheridan Square. *Jickagl Vbzyetch.*"

Halfway to the cab, the driver stopped short, with a remembering look on his face, and held

out his hand insinuatingly.

Cavanaugh took the bills out of his wallet and fanned them at him. The driver shook his head. "Ngup-joke," he said sadly, and turned back toward his wall.

TWENTY minutes later Cavanaugh was poorer by one thirty-carat diamond, and the cab driver, with a smile on his honest face, was opening the door for him at the western corner of Sheridan Square (which is triangular), a few yards from the bullet-colored statue of the General.

Cavanaugh made signs to him to wait, got a happy grin and a nod in reply, and ran down the block.

He passed Janigian's shop once without recognizing it, and for an excellent reason: there was not a shoe or a slipper visible anywhere in the big, bare work- and sales-room.

The door was ajar. Cavanaugh went in, stared suspiciously at the empty shelves and then at the door to the back room, which was closed by a hasp and the largest, heaviest padlock he had ever seen in his life. This was odd, (a) because Janigian did not believe in locking his doors, and this one, in fact, had never even had a latch, and (b) because Janigian never went anywhere—having been permanently startled, some years ago, by E. B. White's commentary on

the way the pavement comes up to meet your foot when you lift it.

Cavanaugh stepped forward, got his fingernails into the crack between the door and the jamb, and pulled.

The hasp, being attached to the jamb only by the sawed-off heads of two screws, came free; the door swung open.

Inside was Janigian.

He was sitting cross-legged on a small wooden chest, looking moderately wild-eyed. He had a rusty shotgun across his thighs, and two ten-inch butcher knives were stuck into the floor in front of him.

When he saw Cavanaugh he raised the gun, then lowered it a trifle. "Odeh!" he said. Cavanaugh translated this as "Aha!" which was Janigian's standard greeting.

"Odeh yourself," he said. He took out his wallet, removed his other diamond—the big one—and held it up.

Janigian nodded solemnly. He stood up, holding the shotgun carefully under one arm, and with the other, without looking down, opened the lid of the chest. He pulled aside a half-dozen dirty shirts, probed deeper, and scrambled up a handful of something.

He showed it to Cavanaugh.

Diamonds.

He let them pour back into the chest, dropped the shirts back on top, closed the lid and sat down again. "Odeh!" he said.

This meant "Good-by." Cavanaugh went away.

HIS headache, which had left him imperceptibly somewhere on 42nd Street, was making itself felt again. Cursing without inspiration, Cavanaugh walked back up to the corner.

Now what? Was he supposed to pursue the Hooligan to the Philippines, or Sweden, or Mexico?

Well, why not?

If I don't get him, Cavanaugh told himself, I'll be living in a cave a year from now. I'll make a lousy caveman. Grubs for dinner again . . .

The cabman was still waiting on the corner. Cavanaugh snarled at him and went into the cigar store across the street. From an ankle-deep layer of neckties, pocket books, and mashed candy bars he picked out a five-borough map. He trudged back across the street and got into the cab.

The driver looked at him expectantly. "Your mother has hairy ears," Cavanaugh told him.

"Zee kwa?" said the driver.

"Three of them," Cavanaugh said. He opened the map to the Queens-Long Island section, managed to locate Flushing Bay, and drew an X—which, on second thought, he scribbled into a dot—where LaGuardia Field ought to be.

The driver looked at it, nodded

—and held out his meaty hand.

Cavanaugh controlled an impulse to spit. Indignantly, he drew a picture of the diamond he had already given the man, pointed to it, then to the cabman, then to the map.

The driver shrugged and gestured outside with his thumb.

Cavanaugh gritted his teeth, shut his eyes tight, and counted to twenty. Eventually, when he thought he could trust himself to hold anything with a sharp point, he picked up the pen, found the Manhattan section of the map, and made a dot at 50th and 2nd Avenue. He drew another picture of a diamond, with an arrow pointing to the dot.

The driver studied it. He leaned farther over the seat and put a stubby finger on the dot. "Fa mack alaha gur'l hih?" he demanded suspiciously.

"Your father comes from a long line of orang-outangs with loathsome diseases," said Cavanaugh, crossing his heart.

Reassured by the polysyllables, the driver put his machine into motion.

At the apartment, while the driver lurked heavily in the living room, Cavanaugh picked out the very smallest diamond to pay his fare, and twelve others, from middling to big, for further emergencies. He also took two cans of hash, a can of tamales, an opener,

a spoon, and a bottle of tomato juice in a paper bag; the thought of food revolted him at the moment, but he would have to eat sometime. Better than grubs, anyway . . .

ALL the main arteries out of New York, Cavanaugh discovered, were choked—everybody who was on the island was apparently trying to get off, and vice versa. Nobody was paying much attention to traffic signals, and the battered results were visible at nearly every intersection.

It took them two hours to get to LaGuardia.

Some sort of a struggle was going on around a car parked in front of the terminal building. As Cavanaugh's cab pulled up, the crowd broke and surged toward them; Cavanaugh had barely time to open the door and leap out. When he had bounced off the hood, tripped over somebody feet, butted someone else in the stomach, and finally regained his balance, a few seconds later, he saw the cab turning on two wheels, with one rear door hanging open, and a packed mass of passengers bulging out like a bee-swarm. Its tail lights wavered off down the road, a few stragglers running frantically after it.

Cavanaugh walked carefully around the diminished mob, still focused on the remaining car, and

went into the building. He fought his way through the waiting room, losing his paper bag, several buttons from his shirt, and nine tenths of his temper, and found an open gate onto the field.

The huge, flood-lighted area was one inextricable confusion of people, dogs and airplanes—more planes than Cavanaugh had ever seen in one place before; forests of them—liners, transports, private planes of every size and shape.

The dogs were harder to account for. There seemed to be several dozen of them in this immediate vicinity, all large and vociferous. One especially active Dalmatian, about the size of a cougar, circled Cavanaugh twice and then reared up to put two tremendous forepaws on his chest. Cavanaugh fell like a tree. Man and dog stared at each other, eye to eye, for one poignant moment; then the beast whirled, thumping Cavanaugh soundly in the ribs, and was gone.

Raging, Cavanaugh arose and stalked forth onto the field. Somebody grabbed his sleeve and shouted in his ear; Cavanaugh swung at him, whirled completely around, and cannoned into somebody else, who hit him with a valise. Some time later, confused in mind and bruised of body, he found himself approaching a small, fragile-looking monoplane on whose wing sat an expressionless man in a leather jacket.

Cavanaugh climbed up beside him, panting. The other looked at him thoughtfully and raised his left hand, previously concealed by his body. There was a spanner in it.

Cavanaugh sighed. Raising one hand for attention, he opened his wallet and took out one of the larger gems.

The other man lowered the spanner a trifle.

Cavanaugh felt for his fountain pen; it was gone. Dipping one finger in the blood that was trickling from his nose, he drew a wobbly outline map of North America on the surface of the wing.

The other winced slightly, but watched with interest.

Cavanaugh drew the United States-Mexico border, and put a large dot, or blob, south of it. He pointed to the plane, to the dot, and held up the diamond.

The man shook his head.

Cavanaugh added a second.

The man shook his head again. He pointed to the plane, made motions as if putting earphones on his head, cocked his head in a listening attitude, and shook his head once more. *No radio.*

With one flattened hand, he made a zooming motion upward; with the other, he drew a swift line across his throat. *Suicide.*

Then he sketched an unmilitary salute. *Thanks just the same.*

Cavanaugh climbed down from

the wing. The next pilot he found gave him the same answer; and the next; and the next. There wasn't any fifth, because, in taking a shortcut under a low wing, he tripped over two silently struggling gentlemen who promptly transferred their quarrel to him. When he recovered from a momentary inattention, they were gone, and so was the wallet with the diamonds.

Cavanaugh walked back to Manhattan.

COUNTING the time he spent asleep under a trestle somewhere in Queens, it took him twelve hours. Even an Oregonian can find his way around in Manhattan, but a Manhattanite gets lost anywhere away from his island. Cavanaugh missed the Queensborough Bridge somehow, wandered south into Brooklyn without realizing it (he would rather have died), and wound up some sixty blocks off his course at the Williamsburg Bridge; this led him via Delancey Street into the Lower East Side, which was not much improvement.

Following the line of least resistance, and yearning for civilization (i.e., midtown New York), Cavanaugh moved northwestward along that erstwhile cowpath variously named the Bowery, Fourth Avenue and Broadway. Pausing only to rummage in a Union

Square fruit-drink stand for cold frankfurters, he reached 42nd Street at half-past ten, twenty-three and one-half hours after his introduction to the Hooligan.

Times Square, never a very inspiring sight in the morning, was very sad and strange. Traffic, a thin trickle, was moving spasmodically. Every car had its windows closed tight, and Cavanaugh saw more than one passenger holding a rifle. The crowds on the littered sidewalks did not seem to be going anywhere, or even thinking about going anywhere. They were huddling.

Bookstores were empty and their contents scattered over the pavement; novelty shops, cafeterias, drug stores . . . the astonishing thing was that, here and there, trade was still going on. Money would still buy you a bottle of liquor, or a pack of cigarettes, or a can of food—the necessities. Pricing was a problem, but it was being solved in a forthright manner: above each counter, the main items of the store's stock in trade were displayed, each with one or two bills pasted to it. Cigarettes—George Washington. A fifth of whiskey—Alexander Hamilton and Abraham Lincoln. A can of ersatzized meat—Andrew Jackson.

There was even one movie house open for business. It was showing a Charlie Chaplin Festival.

Cavanaugh was feeling extremely light-headed and unsubstantial. *Babylon, that great city!* he thought; and *Somewhere, parently, in the ginnandgo gap between antediluvius and annadominant the copyist must have fled with his scroll . . .*

The human race had now, in effect, Had It. New York was no longer a city, it was simply the raw material for an archaeologists' puzzle; a midden heap; and thinking of *Finnegan* again, he remembered, *What a mnice old mness it all mnakes!*

He looked at the faces around him, blank with a new misery, the misery of silence. *That's what hits them the hardest,* he thought. *The speechlessness. They don't care about not being able to read—it's a minor annoyance. But they like to talk.*

And yet, the human race could have survived if only the spoken word had been bollixed up, not the written word. It would have been easy enough to work out universal sound-symbols for the few situations where speech was really vital. Nothing could replace the textbooks, the records, the libraries, the business letters.

By now, Cavanaugh thought bitterly, the Hooligan was trading shiny beads for grass skirts in Honolulu, or carved walrus tusks in Alaska, or—

Or was he? Cavanaugh stopped

short. He had, he realized, been thinking of the Hooligan popping into view all over the globe the way he had appeared in his apartment—and, when he was through, popping back to where he belonged from wherever he happened to be.

But, if he could travel that way, *why had he left Cavanaugh's place on a Second Avenue bus?*

Cavanaugh scrabbled frantically through his memory.

His knees sagged.

The Hooligan had showed him, in the disk, that the two—universes, call them—came together rarely, and when they did, touched at one point only. Last time, the plain of Shinar. This time, Cavanaugh's living room.

And that one flicker, light-dark-light, before the pictured Hooligan moved back to its own sphere—

Twenty-four hours.

Cavanaugh looked at his watch. It was 10:37.

He ran.

LEAD-FOOTED, three-quarters dead, and cursing himself, the Hooligan, the human race, God the Creator, and the entire imaginable cosmos with the last breath in his body. Cavanaugh reached the corner of 49th and Second just in time to see the Hooligan pedaling briskly up the avenue on a bicycle.

He shouted, or tried to; nothing but a wheeze came out.

Whistling with agony, he lurched

around the corner and ran to keep from falling on his face. He almost caught up with the Hooligan at the entrance to the building, but he couldn't stop to get the breath to make a noise. The Hooligan darted inside and up the stairs; Cavanaugh followed.

He can't open the door, he thought, halfway up. But when he reached the third-floor landing, the door was open.

Cavanaugh made one last effort, leaped like a salmon, tripped over the doorsill, and spread-eagled himself on the floor in the middle of the room.

The Hooligan, one step away from the drawing table, turned with a startled "Chaya-dnih?"

Seeing Cavanaugh, he came forward with an expression of pop-eyed concern.

Cavanaugh couldn't move.

Muttering excitedly to himself, the Hooligan produced the green-and-white doodad from somewhere—much, presumably, as a human being might have gone for the medicinal brandy—and set it on the floor near Cavanaugh's head.

"Urgh!" said Cavanaugh. With one hand, he clutched the Hooligan's disk.

The pictures formed without any conscious planning: the doodad, the lights flashing off and on in a skull—dozens, hundreds of skulls—then buildings falling, trains crashing, volcanoes erupting . . .

The Hooligan's eyes bulged half out of their sockets. "Hakdaz!" he said, clapping his hands to his ears. He seized the disk and made conciliatory pictures—the doodad and a glass of wine, melting into each other.

"I know that," said Cavanaugh hoarsely, struggling up to one elbow. "But *can you fix it?*" He made a picture of the Hooligan gesturing at the flashing lights, which promptly vanished.

"Deech, deech," said Hooligan, nodding violently. He picked up the doodad and somehow broke the green base of it into dozens of tiny cubes, which he began to re-assemble, apparently in a different order, with great care.

Cavanaugh hauled himself up into an armchair and let himself go limp as a glove. He watched the Hooligan, telling himself drowsily that if he wasn't careful, he'd be asleep in another minute. There was something odd about the room, something extraordinarily soothing . . . after a moment he realized what it was.

The silence.

THE two fishwives who infested the floor below were not screaming pleasantries across the courtyard at each other. Nobody was playing moron-music on a radio tuned six times too loud for normal hearing.

The landlady was not shouting

instructions from the top floor to the janitor in the basement.

Silence. Peace.

For some reason, Cavanaugh's mind turned to the subject of silent films: Chaplin, the Keystone Cops, Douglas Fairbanks, Garbo . . . they would have to bring them out of the cans again, he thought, for everybody, not just the patrons of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library . . .

Congress would have to rig up some sort of Telautograph system, with a screen above the Speaker's desk, perhaps.

Television. Television, thought Cavanaugh dreamily, would have to shut up and put up.

No more campaign oratory.

No more banquet speeches.

No more singing commercials.

Cavanaugh sat up. "Listen," he said tensely. "Could you fix just the writing—not the speech?"

The Hooligan goggled at him and held out the disk.

Cavanaugh took it and slowly began putting the idea into careful pictures . . .

THE Hooligan was gone—vanished like a burst soap bubble at the end of a headfirst dive across Cavanaugh's drawing table.

Cavanaugh sat where he was, listening. From outside, after a moment, came a confused, distance-muted roar. All over the city—all over the world, Cava-

naugh supposed—people were discovering that they could read again; that the signs meant what they said; that each man's sudden island had been rejoined to the main.

It lasted twenty minutes and then faded slowly. In his mind's eye, Cavanaugh saw the orgy of scribbling that must be beginning now. He sat, and listened to the blessed silence.

In a little while a growing twinge forced itself upon his attention, like a forgotten toothache. After a moment Cavanaugh identified it as his conscience. *Just who are you*, conscience was saying, *to take away the gift of speech—the thing that once was all that distinguished man from the apes?*

Cavanaugh dutifully tried to feel repentant, but it didn't work. *Who said it was a gift?* he asked his conscience. *What did we use it for?*

I'll tell you, he said. *In the cigar store: Hey, waddaya think of them Yankees? Yeah, that was som'n, wasn't it? Sure was! I tell you . . .*

At home: So, how was the office t'day? Aa. Same goddamn madhouse. How'l it go with you? Awright. I can't complain. Kids okay? Yaa. Uh-uh. What's f-dinner?

At a party: Hello, Harry! What-taya say, boy! How are ya? That's good. How's the . . . so I said to him, you can't tell me what I'm

gonna . . . like to, but it don't agree with me. It's my stummick; th' doctor says . . . organdy, with little gold buttons . . . Oh, yeah? Well, how would you like a poke in the snoot?

On the street corners: Lebensraum . . . Nordische Blut . . .

I, said Cavanaugh, rest my case.

Conscience did not reply.

In the silence, Cavanaugh walked across the room to the record cabinet and pulled out an album. He could read the lettering on its spine:

MAHLER, *The Song of the Earth*

He picked out one of the disks and put it on the machine—the Drunkard's Song in the fifth movement.

Cavanaugh smiled beatifically, listening. It was an artificial remedy, he was thinking . . . from the Hooligan's point of view, the human race was now permanently a little tipsy. And so what?

The words the tenor was singing were gibberish to Cavanaugh—but then they always had been; Cavanaugh spoke no German. He knew what the words meant. *Was geht mich denn der Frühling an!?*

Laaast mich betrunken sein!

—“What then is the Spring to me? . . . Let me be drunk!”

Damon Langley

Share Alike

By JEROME BIXBY
and JOE E. DEAN

Casting bread upon the water is fine

— as long as you're not the bread!

THEY spread-eagled themselves in the lifeboat, bracing hands and feet against the gunwales.

Above them, the pitted and barnacled stern of the *S. S. Luciano*, two days out of Palermo and now headed for hell, reared up hugely into the overcast of oily black smoke that boiled from ports and superstructure. Craig had time to note that the screws were still slowly turning, and that a woman was screaming from the crazily-

tilted afterdeck. Then the smoke intervened—a dark pall that lowered about the lifeboat as the wind shifted, blotting out the sky, the ship.

Fire met water. One roared; the other hissed. Gouts of blazing gasoline flared through the smoke like flame demons dancing on the waves.

Groaning, shuddering, complaining with extreme bitterness, the ship plunged.

Sky and smoke became a sick-

Illustrated by KOSSIN

ening whirl, as the lifeboat tore into the churning water in a suicidal effort to follow the parent ship to the bottom. Spray flew; waves loomed, broke, fell away; the lifeboat shipped water. Craig cursed aloud, making rage a substitute for terror. Facing him, Hofmanstahal grinned sourly.

The small boat righted itself. It was still in violent motion, lurching aimlessly across a sea jagged with whitecaps; but Craig knew that the crisis was past. He lifted his face into the cold wind, pulling himself up from the water-slopping bottom of the boat until his chin rested on the gunwale.

A wide patch of brownish foam and oil-scum spread slowly from the vortex of exploding bubbles that rose from the vanished ship.

The sea quieted. A gull swooped down and lit on an orange-crate that had bobbed to the surface.

"Well," said Craig. "Well. That's that."

HOFMANSTAHAL peeled off his shirt, wrung it out over the side. The hair that matted his thick chest and peeped from his armpits had a golden sheen that was highlighted by the sun. A small cut was under his left eye, a streak of oil across his forehead.

"You were of the crew?" he asked.

"Yes."

"But not an A. B. You are too

spindly for that."

"I was navigator."

Hofmanstahal chuckled, a deep sound that told of large lungs. "Do you think you can navigate us out of this, my friend?"

"I won't have to. We're in a well-traveled shipping lane. We'll be picked up soon enough."

"How soon might that be?"

"I don't know. I don't even knew if we got an SOS out; it all happened so fast." Craig sighed, rolled over so that he sat with his back curved against the side of the boat. "I doubt if we did, though. The tanks right under the radio shack were the first to go. I wonder who got careless with a cigarette . . ."

"M'm. So we'll eventually be picked up. And in the meantime, do we starve?"

Craig got up tiredly. "You underestimate the Merchant Marine." He sloshed to the stern of the lifeboat, threw open the food locker; They saw kegs of water, tins of biscuits and salt meat, canned juices, a first-aid kit.

"More than enough," Craig said. He turned, searched the surrounding swells. "I wonder if any other survived . . ."

Hofmanstahal shook his head. "I have been looking too. No others. All were sucked down with the ship."

Craig kept looking. Smoke, heaving stained water, debris, a

few dying gasoline-flames — that was all.

Hofmanstahal said, "At least we shall be well fed. Did you have any close friends aboard?"

"No." Craig sat down, pushed wet hair back from his forehead, let his hands fall to his lap. "And you?"

"Me? No one. I have outlived all my friends. I content myself with being a man of the crowd. A select group of *bon vivants* for drinking and conversation . . . it is enough."

SITTING with a seat between them, as if each somehow wanted to be alone, the men exchanged backgrounds. By his own account, Hofmanstahal was an adventurer. No locality could hold him for long, and he seldom revisited a place he already knew. He had been secretary to a former Resident in Malaya, and concerned himself with gems in Borneo, with teak in China; a few of his paintings had been displayed in the *Galerie des Arts* in Paris. He had been en route to Damascus to examine some old manuscripts which he believed might contain references to one of his ancestors.

"Although I was born in Brashov," he said, "family records indicate that we had our beginnings elsewhere. You may think it snobbish, this delving into my background, but it is a hobby which has absorbed me for many years.

I am not looking for glory; only for facts."

"Nothing wrong with that," Craig said. "I envy you your colorful past."

"Is yours so dull, then?"

"Not dull . . . the colors just aren't so nice. I grew up in the Atlanta slums. Things were pretty rough when I was a kid—"

"You weren't big enough to be tough."

Craig nodded, wondering why he didn't resent this second reference to his small size. He decided that it was because he liked the big man. Hofmanstahal wasn't insolent, just candid and direct.

"I read a lot," Craig went on. "My interest in astronomy led me into navigation while I was in the Navy. After I was mustered out I stayed at sea rather than go back to what I'd left."

They continued to converse in low, earnest voices for the remainder of the afternoon. Always above them the white gulls circled.

"Beautiful, aren't they?" asked Craig.

Hofmanstahal looked up. His pale eyes narrowed. "Scavengers! See the wicked eyes, the cruel beaks! Pah!"

Craig shrugged. "Let's eat. And hadn't you better do something for that cut under your eye?"

Hofmanstahal shook his massive head. "You eat, if you wish. I am not hungry." He touched his tongue

to the dribble of blood that ran down his cheek.

THEY kept track of the days by cutting notches in the gunwale. There were two notches when Craig first began to wonder about Hofmanstahal.

They had arranged a system of rationing for food and water. It was far from being a strict ration, for there was plenty for both of them.

But Craig never saw Hofmanstahal eat.

The Rumanian, Craig thought, was a big man, he should certainly have an equally big appetite.

"I prefer," said Hofmanstahal, when Craig asked about it, "to take my meals at night."

Craig let it pass, assuming that the big man had a digestive disorder, or perhaps was one of those unfortunates who possess inhibitions about eating in front of others. Not that the latter seemed likely, considering Hofmanstahal's amiably aggressive personality and the present unusual circumstances but, on the other hand, what did it matter? Let him eat standing on his head if he wanted to.

Next morning, when Craig opened the food locker to get his share, the food supply was apparently undiminished.

The morning after that, the same thing.

Another notch. Five days, now. And Craig found something else

to puzzle about. He was eating well; yet he felt himself sinking deeper and deeper into a strange, uncaring lethargy, as if he were well on his way toward starvation.

He took advantage of the abundance of food to eat more than was his wont. It didn't help.

Hofmanstahal, on the other hand, greeted each day with a sparkling eye and a spate of good-humored talk.

Both men by now had beards. Craig detested his, for it itched. Hofmanstahal was favoring his, combing it with his fingers, already training the mustache with insistent twiddlings of thumb and forefinger.

Craig lay wearily in the bow and watched.

"Hofmanstahal," he said. "You're not starving yourself on my account, are you? It isn't necessary, you know."

"No, my friend. I have never eaten better."

"But you've hardly touched the stores."

"Ah!" Hofmanstahal flexed his big muscles. Sunlight flickered along the golden hair that fuzzed his torso. "It is the inactivity. My appetite suffers."

ANOTHER notch. Craig continued to wonder. Each day, each hour, found him weaker, more listless. He lay in the bow of the boat, soaking in the warmth of the

sun, his eyes opaque, his body limp. Sometimes he let one hand dangle in the cool water; but the appearance of ugly, triangular shark fins put a stop to that.

"They are like all of nature, the sharks," Hofmanstahal said. "They rend and kill, and give nothing in return for the food they so brutally take. They can offer only their very bodies, which are in turn devoured by larger creatures: And on and on. The world is not a pretty place, my friend."

"Are men so different?"

"Men are the worst of all."

Seven notches, now. Craig was growing weaker. He was positive by now that Hofmanstahal was simply not eating.

There were nine notches on the gunwale when Craig found that Hofmanstahal *was* eating, after all.

It was night, and the sea was rougher than it had been. The *slap-slap* of waves against the hull wakened Craig from a deep, trancelike sleep. That, and the oppressive feeling of a nearby presence.

He stirred, felt the presence withdraw. Through half-shut eyes he saw Hofmanstahal, darkly silhouetted against a sky ablaze with stars.

"You were crying out in your sleep, my friend." The big man's voice was solicitous. "Nightmare?"

"My throat . . . stinging, burning. I . . ."

"The salt air. You will be all right in the morning."

Craig's face felt like a numb mask of clay. It was an effort to move his lips. "I think—I think I'm going—to die."

"No. You are not going to die. You must not. If you die, I die."

Craig thought about that. The rocking of the boat was gentle, soothing. A warmth stole over him, though the night was cool. He was weak, but comfortable; fearful, yet content. Head back, breathing easily, he let himself become aware of the glory of the heavens.

The constellation Perseus was slanting toward the western horizon, and Craig noted almost unconsciously, with the skill of long practice, that the variable star Algol was at its maximum brilliancy. Algol—the ghoul.

The thought lingered. It turned over and over in his mind, as his unconscious seemed to examine it for some hidden meaning.

Then, abruptly, the thought surged up into his conscious mind.

And he knew.

He lifted himself up to his elbows, supporting himself weakly.

"Hofmanstahal," he said, "you're a vampire. Aren't you?"

The other's chuckle was deep and melodious in the darkness.

"Answer me, Hofmanstahal. Are you a vampire?"

"Yes."

CRAIG had fainted. Now it was as if layer after layer of blackness were being removed, bringing him closer to the light with every moment. A tiny sullen orange disk glowed in the darkness, expanding, increasing in brightness until it filled the world.

The blackness was gone, and he was staring up into the blinding, brassy heart of the sun.

He gasped and turned his head away.

There was music. Someone whistling a German folk tune.

Hofmanstahal . . .

Hofmanstahal sat in the stern, his brawny gold-fuzzed forearms resting on his knees.

The whistling stopped.

"Good morning, my friend. You have had a good, long rest."

Craig stared, his lips working.

Far above a gull called harshly, and was answered by one skimming at water level.

Hofmanstahal smiled. "You mustn't look at me that way. I'm almost harmless, I assure you." He laughed gently. "Things could be much worse, you know. Suppose, for example, I had been a werewolf. Eh?"

He waited a moment.

"Oh, yes, Lycanthropy is real—as real as those gulls out there. Or—more fitting, perhaps—as real as those sharks. Once, in Paris, I lived for three months with a young woman who was a public bath at-

tendant by day and a werewolf by night. She would choose her victims by their—"

CRAIG listened numbly, aware that Hofmanstahal was merely making idle talk. The story of the female werewolf turned into an anecdote, patently untrue. Hofmanstahal chuckled at it, and seemed disappointed when Craig did not. There was a certain sensitive shyness about the big Rumanian, Craig thought . . . a sensitive vampire! Aware of Craig's revulsion, he was camouflaging the situation with a flood of words.

"—And when the gendarme saw that the bullet which had killed her was an ordinary lead one, he said, 'Messieurs, you have done this *pauvre jeune fille* a grave injustice.' Ha! The moment was a sad one for me, but—"

"Stop it!" Craig gasped. "Go turn yourself into a bat or something and fly away. Just get out of my sight . . . my blood in your stomach . . ."

He tried to turn away, and his elbows slipped. His shoulder-blades thumped the bottom of the boat. He lay there, eyes closed, and his throat thickened as if he wanted to laugh and vomit at the same time.

"I cannot turn myself into a bat, my friend. Ugly little creatures—" Hofmanstahal sighed heavily. "Nor do I sleep in a coffin. Nor

does daylight kill me, as you can see. All that is superstition. Superstition! Do you know that my grandfather died with a white ash stake through his heart?" His beard tilted angrily. "Believe me, we variants have more to fear from the ignorant and superstitious than they from us. There are so many of them, and so few of us."

Craig said, "You won't touch me again!"

"Ah, but I must."

"I'm still strong enough to fight you off."

"But not strong enough to get at the food if I choose to prevent you."

Craig shook his head. "I'll throw myself overboard!"

"That I cannot permit. Now, why not submit to the inevitable? Each day, I will supply you with your ration of food; each night, you will supply me with mine. A symbiotic relationship. What could be fairer?"

"Beast! Monster! *I will not*—"

Hofmanstahal sighed, and looked out over the tossing sea. "Monster. Always they say that of us; they, who feed off the burned flesh of living creatures."

IT WAS the face of his father, stern and reproving, that Craig always saw before him during those long nights in the lifeboat. His father, who had been a Baptist minister. When the lifeboat



drifted on a sea that was like glass, reflecting the stars with such clarity that the boat might have been suspended in a vast star-filled sphere, and Craig felt the warm, moist lips of the vampire at his throat—then conscience arose in the form of his father.

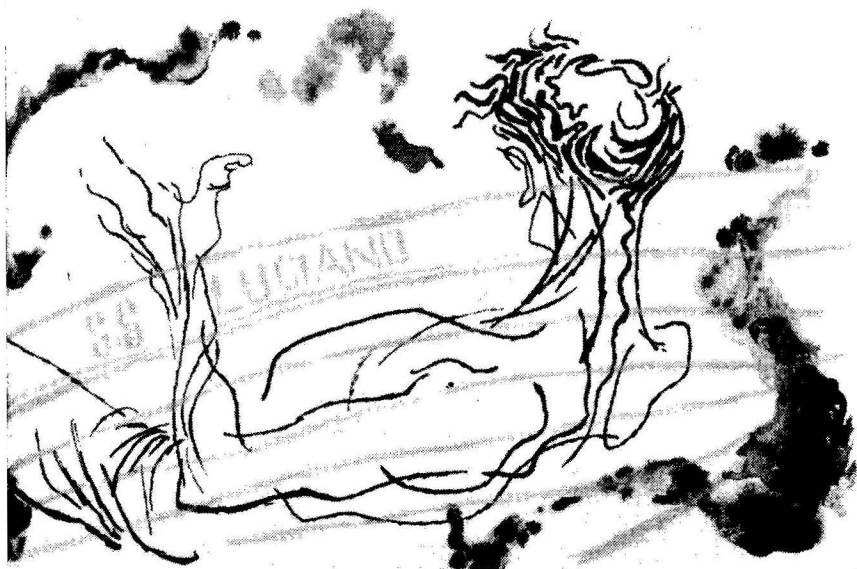
Well . . . he wasn't submitting willingly. Not at first. But the food had been withheld until his belly twisted with hunger and he cried out with parched lips for water. Then, shudderingly, he had allowed the vampire to feed.

It was not as bad as he had expected. An acute, stinging sensation as the sharp canines pricked the flesh (strange, that he had not noticed before how *sharp* they

were); then numbness as the anesthetic venom did its work. The venom must have been a hypnotic. As the numbness spread toward his face, and his lips and cheeks became chill, strange colors danced before his eyes, blending and twining in cloudy patterns that sent his thoughts wandering down incomprehensible byways. He was part of Hofmanstahal. Hofmanstahal was part of him. The feeling was almost lascivious.

And each time it was less painful, less shocking, till finally it was mere routine.

Strangely, his conscience did not torment him during the day. The comfortable warmth and lassitude that before had only touched



him now enveloped him completely. His thoughts were vague; memory tended to slip away from what had gone before, and to evade what was to come. The sea, the sky, the wheeling gulls were beautiful. And Hofmanstahal, vampire or not, was an interesting conversationalist.

"You are pale, friend Craig," he would say. "Perhaps I have been too greedy. Do you know, with that wan face and the beard, you remind me of a poet I knew in Austria. For a long time he was one of my favorite companions. But perhaps you did not know that we prefer certain donors to others. Believe me, we are not the indiscriminate gluttons that literature would have you think."

"How—did you become as you are?"

"How did I, Eric Hofmanstahal, become a vampire? That is a question with broad implications. I can tell you that my people were vampires, but that leaves unanswered the question of our origin. This I cannot tell you, though I have searched deeply into the matter. There are legends, of course, but they are contradictory." Hofmanstahal stroked his beard and seemed lost in thought.

"Some say," he went on, after a moment, "that when *homo sapiens* and the ape branched from a common ancestor, there was a third strain which was so despised

by both that it was driven into obscurity. Others maintain that we came to Earth from another planet, in prehistoric times. There is even mention of a species which was quite different from man but which, because of man's dominance over the earth, imitated him until it developed a physical likeness to him. Then there is the fanciful notion that we are servants of the Devil—one battalion among his legions, created by him to spread sorrow and misery throughout the ages of the world.

"Legends! We have been persecuted, imprisoned, burned alive; we have been classified as maniacs and perverts—all because our body chemistry is unlike that of man. We drink from the fountain of life while man feasts at the fleshpots of the dead; yet we are called monsters." He crumpled a biscuit in his powerful hand and cast the pieces upon the water, which immediately boiled with sharks.

"Man!" he said softly.

LIFE went on. Craig ate. Hofmanstahal fed. And horror diminished with familiarity.

There were only the two of them, under the vast sky, rising and falling gently to the whim of the sea. The horizon was the edge of their world. No other existed. Night and day merged into gray sameness. Sea and sky were vague, warm reflections; the motion of

the boat soothed. This was peace. There was no thought of resistance left in Craig. Hofmanstahal's "symbiosis" became a way of life; then life itself.

There was time in plenty to gaze up at the stars, a pleasure which everyday exigencies had so often denied him. And there was strange, dark companionship; lips that sought his throat and drained away all thoughts of urgency or violent action, leaving him exhausted and somehow thrilled. It was peace. It was satisfaction. It was fulfilment.

Fear was lost in stupor; revulsion, in a certain sensuality. Hofmanstahal's nightly visit was no longer a thing of horror, but the soft arrival of a friend whom he wanted to help with all his being, and who was in turn helping him. Night and day they exchanged life; and the life they nurtured became a single flow and purpose between them. Craig was the quiescent vessel of life, which Hofmanstahal filled every day, so that life might build itself against the coming of night and the return of its essence to Hofmanstahal.

Day and night marched above them toward the pale horizon that circumscribed their world. In their world values had changed, and the fact of change been forgotten.

Still, deep in his mind, Craig's conscience wailed. Legend, history, the church, all at one time or an-

other had said that vampires were evil. He was submitting to a vampire; therefore, he was submitting to evil. Food or no food, the Reverend Craig would never have submitted. He would have sharpened a stake or cast a silver bullet—

But there were no such things here. His father's face rose before him to tell him that this did not matter. He sought to drive it away, but it remained. During the moments of nightly meeting, of warmth and strange intimacy, it glared down upon them brighter than the moon. But Hofmanstahal's back was always turned to it; and Craig, in all his weakness and agony and ecstasy and indecision, did not mention it.

THEY had forgotten to carve the notches on the gunwale. Neither was certain now how long they had been adrift.

There came a day, however, when Hofmanstahal was forced to cut down Craig's ration of food.

"I am sorry," he said, "but you can see for yourself that it is necessary."

"We're so near the end of our supplies, then?"

"I am sorry," Hofmanstahal repeated. "Yes, we are nearing the end of your supplies . . . and if yours end, so will mine eventually."

"I don't really mind," Craig whispered. "I'm seldom really

hungry now. At first, even the full rations left me unsatisfied, but now I don't even like the taste of the food. I suppose it's because I'm getting no exercise."

Hofmanstahal's smile was gentle. "Perhaps. Perhaps not. We must keep a sharp lookout for ships. If one does not come soon, we will starve, though, of course, I will now cut down my own rations as well as yours."

"I don't care."

"My poor Craig, when you regain your strength you will care very much. Like me, you will want to live and go on living."

"Maybe. But now I feel that dying would be easy and pleasant. Better, maybe, than going back to the world."

"The world is evil, yes; but the will to live in it drives all of us."

Craig lay motionless and wondered, with a clarity of mind he had not experienced in many, many days, whether he dreaded going back to the world because the world was evil, or whether it was because he felt that he himself was tainted, unfit to mix with human beings again.

. . . And Hofmanstahal might be a problem. Should he be reported to the authorities? No, for then they would know about Craig.

But was all that had happened so disgraceful, so reprehensible? Had Craig had any other choice but to do what he had done?

None.

His conscience, in the form of his father, screamed agony.

Well, then perhaps Hofmanstahal would try to force him to continue the relationship. Had he—*pleased* the Rumanian? He felt that he had . . .

But surely gentle, considerate Hofmanstahal, the sensitive vampire, would not try to force—

Craig's mind rebelled against such practical thoughts. They required too much effort. It was easier not to think at all—to lie as he had lain for so many days, peaceful, relaxed, uncaring.

Clarity of mind faded into the gray sameness of day and night. He ate. Hofmanstahal fed.

HE was scarcely conscious when Hofmanstahal spotted the smoke on the horizon. The big man lifted him up so that he could see it. It was a ship, and it was coming in their direction.

"So—now it is over." Hofmanstahal's voice was soft; his hands were warm on Craig's shoulders. "So it ends—our little idyll." The hands tightened. "My friend . . . my friend, before the ship comes, the men and the noise, the work and the worry and all that goes with it, let us for the last time—"

His head bent, his lips found Craig's throat with their almost sexual avidity.

Craig shivered. Over the Ru-

manian's shoulder he could see the ship approaching, a dot on the horizon. There would be men aboard.

Men! Normalcy and sanity, cities and machines and half-forgotten values, coming nearer and nearer over the tossing sea, beneath the brassy sky, from the real world of men that lay somewhere beyond the horizon . . .

Men! Like himself, like his father, who hovered shouting his disgust.

And he, lying in the arms of—
God, God, *what if they should see him!*

He kicked. He threw his arms about. He found strength he hadn't known he had, and threshed and flailed and shrieked with it.

The lifeboat rocked. A foot caught Hofmanstahal in the midriff. The vampire's arms flew wide and he staggered back with a cry: "*Craig—*"

The backs of his knees struck the gunwale—the one with meaningless notches carved in it. His arms lashed as he strove to regain his balance. His eyes locked with Craig's, shock in them. Then he plunged backward into the sea.

The sharks rejected him as food, but not before they had killed him.

Craig found himself weeping in the bottom of the boat, his face in slime. And saying hoarsely again and again, "Eric, I'm sorry—"

IT seemed a very long time before the ship came close enough for him to make out the moving figures on the deck. It seemed so long because of the thoughts and half-formed images that were racing through his brain.

A new awareness was coming over him in a hot flood, an awareness of—

Of the one thing popularly believed about vampires that must have solid foundation in fact.

Had the venom done it? He didn't know. He didn't care.

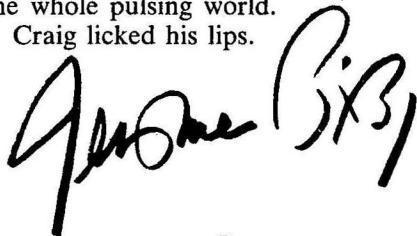
He lay weakly, watching the steamer through half-closed eyes. Sailors lined the rails, their field glasses trained on him.

He wondered if they could see his father. No, of course not—that had all been hallucination. Besides, a moment ago his father had fled.

It was a Navy ship, a destroyer. He was glad of that. He knew the Navy. The men would be healthy. Strenuous duty would make them sleep soundly.

And at the end of its voyage lay the whole pulsing world.

Craig licked his lips.



THE WEDDING

*It's easy to lock the stable
once the horse is stolen — or
close a door behind a demon.*

By RICHARD MATHESON

THEN he told her that they couldn't be married on Thursday because that was the day the Devil married his own mother.

They were at a cocktail party and she wasn't sure what he'd said because the room was noisy and she was a little high.

"What, darlin'?" she asked, leaning over to hear.

He told her again in his serious straightforward manner. She

straightened up and smiled.

"Honest, you're a card," she said and took a healthy sip from her Manhattan.

Later, while he was driving her home, she started talking about the day they were going to get married.

He said they'd have to change it: Any day was all right except Thursday.

"I don't get you, darlin'." She put her head on his unbroad

Illustrated by JOHN FAY

and sloping shoulder.

"Any day is all right *except* Thursday," he repeated.

She looked up, half the amusement dying hard. "All right, hon," she said. "A joke's a joke."

"Who's joking?" he inquired.

She stared at him. "Darlin', are you crazy?"

He said, "No."

"But—you mean you want to change the date because . . .?" She looked flabbergasted. Then she burst into a giggle and punched him on the arm. "You're a card, Frank, you had me goin' for a minute."

HIS small mouth pushed together into an irked bow. "Dearest, I will not marry you on *Thursday*."

Her mouth fell open. She blinked. "My God, you're serious."

"Perfectly," he answered.

"Yeah, but . . ." she began. She chewed her lower lip. "You're crazy," she said, "because . . ."

"Look, is it so important?" he asked. "Why can't it be another day?"

"But you didn't say anythin' when we made the date," she argued.

"I didn't realize it was to be a Thursday."

She tried hard to understand. She thought he must have a secret reason. "But we made the date already," she offered weakly.

"I'm sorry." He was adamant. "Thursday is out!"

She looked at him carefully. "Let's get this straight, Frank. You won't marry me on that Thursday?"

"Not on *any* Thursday."

"Well, I'm tryin' to understand, darlin'. But I'm damned if I can."

He didn't say anything.

Her voice rose. "You're bein' childish!"

"No, I'm not."

She slid away from him on the seat and glared out the window. "I'd like to know what *you'd* call it then." She lowered the pitch of her voice to imitate his. "I won't marry on Thursday because—because the Devil married his—his grandmother or something."

"His mother," he corrected.

She snapped an irritated glance at him and clenched her fists.

"Make it another day and we'll forget the whole thing," he suggested.

"Oh sure. *Sure*," she said. "Forget the whole thing. Forget that my fiancé is afraid he'll make the Devil mad if he marries me on Thursday. That's easy to forget."

"It's nothing to get excited about, dearest."

She groaned. "Oh! If you aren't the—the absolute limit."

SHE turned and looked at him. Her eyes narrowed suspiciously. "How about Wednesday?"

He was silent. Then he cleared his throat with embarrassment.

"I—" he started and then smiled awkwardly. "I forgot that, dear," he said. "Not Wednesday."

She felt dizzy. "Why?" she asked.

"If we married on Wednesday, I'd be a cuckold."

She leaned forward to stare at him. "You'd be a what?" she asked in a shrill voice.

"A cuckold. You'd be unfaithful."

Her face contorted in shock.

"I—I," she spluttered. "Oh, *God*, take me home! I wouldn't marry you *if* you were the last man in the world!"

He kept driving carefully. She couldn't stand the silence.

She glared at him accusingly. "And—and I suppose if we got married on a—a *Sunday*, you'd turn into a pumpkin!"

"Sunday would be fine," he said.

"Oh, I'm so glad for you," she snapped. "You don't know how happy you've made me."

She turned away from him. "Maybe you just don't *want* to marry me. Well, if you don't, *say so!* Don't give me all this stuff about—"

"I want to marry you. You know that. But it has to be the right way. For both our sakes."

She hadn't intended to invite him in. But she was so used to his coming in that she forgot when

they arrived at the house.

"You want a drink?" she asked sullenly as they went into the living room.

"No, thank you. I'd like to talk this thing over with you, sweetheart," he said, pointing to the couch.

She set down her chubby body stiffly. He took her hand. "Dearest, please try to understand," he said.

He slid an arm around her and stroked her shoulder.

In another moment she melted. She looked into his face earnestly. "Darlin'," she said, "I want to understand. But how can I?"

He patted her shoulder. "Now listen, I just know certain things. And I believe that to marry on the wrong day would be fatal to our relationship."

"But—why?"

He swallowed. "Because of consequences."

She didn't say anything. She slid her arms around him and pressed close. He was too comfortable not to marry just because he wouldn't marry on Thursday. Or Wednesday.

She sighed. "All right, darlin'. We'll change it to Sunday. Will that make you happy?"

"Yes," he said. "That will make me happy."

THEN one night he offered her father fifteen dollars to seal the bargain of their marriage.

Mr. O'Shea looked up from his pipe with an inquiring smile. "Would you say that again?" he asked politely.

Frank held out the money. "I wish to pay you this as purchase money for your daughter."

"Purchase money?" asked Mr. O'Shea.

"Yes, purchase."

"Who's sellin' her?" Mr. O'Shea inquired. "I'm givin' her hand in marriage."

"I know that," said Frank. "This is just symbolic."

"Put it in your hope chest," said Mr. O'Shea. He went back to his paper.

"I'm sorry, sir, but you must accept it," Frank insisted.

Then she came downstairs.

Mr. O'Shea looked at his daughter.

"Tell your young man to stop kiddin'," he said.

She looked at Frank with a worried glance. "Aw, you're not startin' in again, Frank?"

Frank explained it to both of them. He made it clear that he in no way regarded her as a mere cash purchase; that it was only the principle of the thing he wished to adhere to for both their sakes.

"All you have to do is take the money," he finished, "and everything will be all right."

She looked at her father. Her father looked at her.

"Take it, Father," she sighed.

Mr. O'Shea shrugged and took the money.

"Four-nine-two," sang Frank, "three-five-seven . . . eight-one-six. Fifteen, fifteen and thrice on my breast I spit to guard me safe from fascinating charms."

"Frank!" she cried. "You got your shirt all wet!"

THEN he told her that, instead of throwing her bouquet, she'd have to let all the men make a rush for her garter.

She squinted at him. "Come on, Frank. This is goin' too far."

He looked pained.

"I'm only trying to make things right for us," he said. "I don't want anything to go wrong."

"But — good God, Frank! — haven't you done enough? You got me to change the wedding day. You *bought* me for fifteen dollars and spit all over yourself in front of Daddy. You make me wear this awful itchy hair bracelet.

"Well, I stood for all that. But I'm gettin' a little tired of it all. Enough's enough!"

Frank got sad. He stroked her hand and looked like Joan of Arc going up in flames. "I'm only trying to do what I think is best. We are beset by a host of dangers. We must be wary of what we do or all is lost."

She stared at him. "Frank, you *do* want to marry me, don't you? This isn't just a scheme to—?"



He took her in his arms and kissed her fervently. "Dearest, I love you, and I want to marry you. But we must do what is right."

Later, Mr. O'Shea said. "He's a jerk. Kick him out on his ear."

But she was rather chubby and she wasn't very pretty and Frank was the only man who'd ever proposed to her.

So she sighed and gave in. She talked it over with her mother and father. She said that everything would be all right as soon as they got married. She said, "I'll humor him until then, and then—whammo!"

But she managed to talk him out of having the male wedding guests make a rush for her garter.

"You don't want me to get my neck broken, do you?" she asked.

"You're right," he said. "Just throw them your stockings."

"Darlin', let me throw my bouquet. Please?"

He looked pensive. "All right, but I don't like it. I don't like it one bit."

He got some salt and put it in the hot oven in her kitchen. After a while he looked in.

"Now our tears are all dry and we're all right for a while," he said.

THE wedding day arrived.

Frank was up bright and early. He went to the church and made sure all the windows were closed tight to keep the demons

out. He told the pastor it was lucky it was February so the doors could be kept closed. He made it quite clear that no one was to be allowed to touch the doors during the ceremony.

The pastor got mad when Frank fired his thirty-eight up the chimney.

"What in Heaven's name are you doing!" he asked.

"I am just frightening off evil spirits," said Frank.

"Young man, there are no evil spirits in the First Calvary Episcopal Church!"

Frank apologized.

But, while the pastor was out in the lobby explaining the shot to a local policeman, Frank took some dishes out of his overcoat pocket, broke them, and put the pieces under pew seats and in corners.

Then he rushed downtown and bought twenty-five pounds of rice in case anyone ran out of it or forgot to bring it.

Hurrying back to his betrothed's house, he rang the bell.

Mrs. O'Shea answered.

Frank asked, "Where's your daughter?"

"You can't see her now," Mrs. O'Shea said.

"I simply must," Frank demanded. He rushed past Mrs. O'Shea and dashed up the stairs.

He found his bride-to-be sitting on the bed in her petticoat polish-

ing the shoes she was going to wear.

She jumped up. "What's the matter with you!" she cried.

"Give me one of your shoes," he gasped. "I almost forgot. It would have been doom if I'd forgotten."

He reached for a shoe.

She drew back. "Get out of here!" she cried, pulling on her bathrobe.

"Give me a shoe!"

She said, "No. What am I supposed to wear? Goloshes?"

"All right," he said, plunged into her closet and came out with another shoe.

"I'll take this," he said and ran from the room.

She remembered something and her wail followed him out, "You aren't supposed to see me before we get married!"

"That's just a silly superstition!" he called back as he jumped down the staircase.

In the kitchen he handed the shoe to Mr. O'Shea who was sipping coffee and smoking his pipe.

"Give it to me," said Frank.

Mr. O'Shea said, "I'd like to."

Frank was oblivious. "Hand the shoe to me and say 'I transfer authority,'" he said.

Mr. O'Shea's mouth fell open. He took the shoe and handed it back dumbly.

"I transfer authority," he said. Then he blinked. "Hey, wait!"

Frank was gone. He jumped back up the stairs.

"No!" she yelled as he ran into her room again. "Get the hell out of here!"

He hit her on the head with the shoe.

She howled.

He swept her into his arms and kissed her violently.

"My dearest wife," he said and ran out.

She burst into tears. "I'm *not* going to marry him!" She threw the polished shoes at the wall. "I don't care if he's the last man in the world. He's awful!"

After a while she picked up the shoes and polished them again.

About then Frank was downtown making sure the caterer had used exactly the right ingredients in the cake. Then he bought her a paper hat to wear when she ran from the church to the sedan. He went to every secondhand store in town and bought all the old shoes he could. This naturally was to use as a defense against malign spirits.

BY the time the wedding hour came, he was exhausted.

He sat in the church anteroom, panting, running over the list he'd made to make sure nothing had been forgotten.

The organ started to play. And she came down the aisle with her father. Frank stood looking at her,

still breathing quite heavily.

Then his eyebrows flew up as he noticed that a latecomer was just entering the front door.

"Oh, no, no!" he cried, covering his face with his hands. "I'm going to go up in a puff of smoke!"

But he didn't.

When he opened his eyes, his bride was holding his hand tightly.

"You see, Frank," she comforted, "you were full of baloney all the time."

The ceremony was performed. And he was so numb with surprise and shock and bewilderment that he forgot about shoes and bouquets and hats and rice.

As they rode to the hotel in the hired limousine, she stroked his hand.

"Superstition," she cooed. "It's the bunk."

"But—" Frank offered.

"Shush," she said, pressing shut

his protest with a kiss. "Aren't you still alive?"

"Yes," said Frank, "and I can't understand it."

At the door to their hotel room, Frank looked at her. She looked at him. The bellboy looked away.

She finally said, "Carry me over the threshold, darlin'."

He smiled a flimsy smile. "I'd feel a little silly about it," he said.

"For me," she insisted. "I'm not entitled to *one* superstition?"

He smiled then. "Yes," he admitted and bent to pick her up.

They never made it. She was really pretty chubby.

"Heart failure," said the doctor.

"Hell and damnation!" she said, remaining in a mottled funk the ensuing ten years.

Richard Matheson

Theodore Dreiser was once seated at a dinner party next to a man who explained that he was a collector of superstitions. Dreiser, always the professional, said, "Going to do a book, of course?"

"Oh, no," exclaimed the man. "Whenever I find a really good superstition, I adopt it. As a matter of fact, Mr. Dreiser, you gave me one of my best superstitions."

"I did?" asked the famous author incredulously.

"Yes, it was in an early book of yours. You had a character who always turned back and stayed home the rest of the day when he saw a cross-eyed woman on his way to work. I've been following it ever since, but one thing puzzles me. I tried to find out where it originated and your book was the only place I ever saw it mentioned. Would you mind telling me where you got that superstition from?"

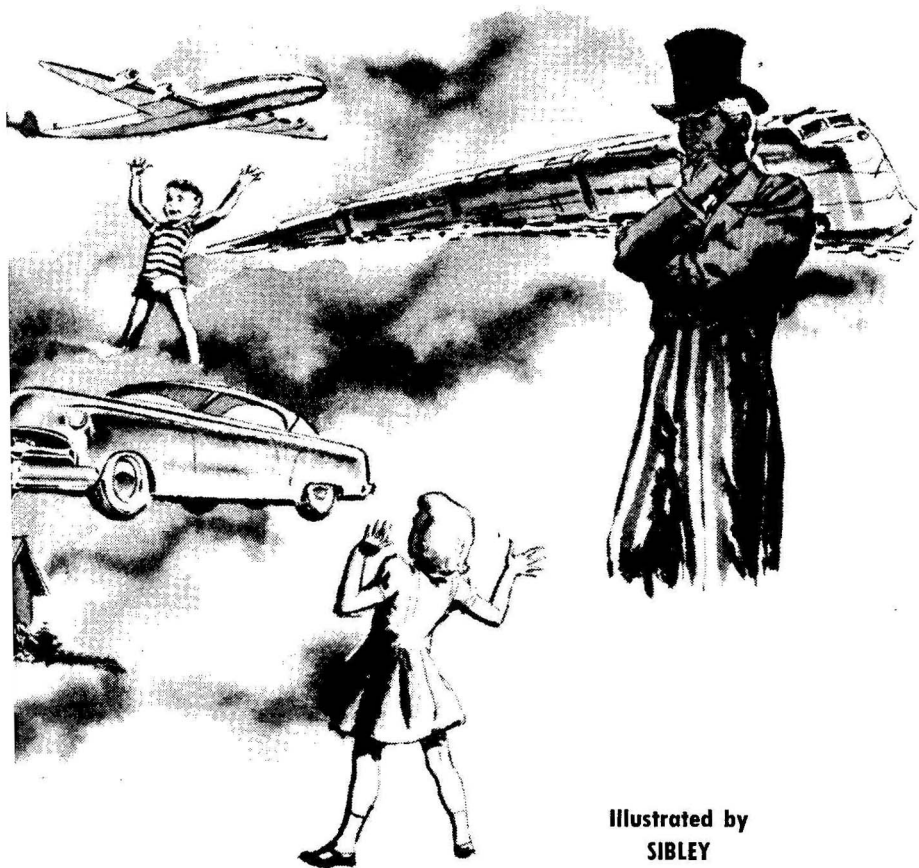
"Not at all," said Dreiser. "I made it up."

*It's really very simple, all
you have to do is wish hard — and beware of the . . .*

EYE FOR INIQUITY

By T. L. SHERRED





Illustrated by
SIBLEY

WE were both surprised the first time I made a ten-dollar bill. My wife sat there and her eyes were as wide as mine. We sat a while, just looking at it. Finally she reached over to my side of the table and poked at it a little gingerly before she

picked it up.

"It looks just like a real one," she said thoughtfully; "looks good, feels good. Wonder if it *is* any good."

I told her I didn't know. "Let me see it once," and she handed it over to me.

I rubbed it gently between my fingers and held it up to the light. The little whorls, so delicately traced on a geometric lathe, were clear and clean; the features of Alexander Hamilton were sharp, the eyes grimly facing to the west. The paper was reasonably crisp, the numbers solidly stamped.

I couldn't see a single thing wrong with it.

My wife is more practical than I. She said, "Maybe you can't see anything wrong with it yourself. But I want to know if they'll take it at the supermarket. We need butter."

They took the ten-dollar bill at the supermarket; we got two pounds of butter, some coffee and some meat, and I bought some magazines with the change. We went home to think it over and chased the kids outside so we could talk without interruption.

JEAN looked at me. "Now what?"

I shrugged. "So we make some more ten-dollar bills. You trying to tell me we don't need any more?"

She knew better than that. "Talk sense, Mike McNally. That ten-dollar bill means that we'll have meat tomorrow instead of macaroni. But that doesn't answer my question; now what?"

I told her I wanted to think it over.

"No, you don't. Any thinking is going to be done on a corporate basis." She meant it. "If you're going ahead with this — well, I'm in it, too."

"Fair enough," I told her. "Let's wait until the kids get to bed and we'll get it straightened out. In the meantime get that other bill out again. I need a new battery, and the right front tire isn't going to last much longer."

She agreed that was fair, and took the other bill — and, I'll say right here that it was the *only* bill we had left, with payday three days away — out of her purse. She laid it on the coffee table in front of me, smoothing out the creases.

"All right," she said. "Go ahead."

I shifted the ten-dollar bill a little closer to me, leaned my elbows on the table, and concentrated.

Almost immediately the duplicate began to take shape; first in outline, then in color, then in fine lines of script and curlicued detail. It took about five seconds in all, I suppose. We hadn't as yet attempted to time it.

While Jean carefully examined the duplicate, I made two more, three in all besides the original. I gave Jean back the original and one of the duplicates to boot and went down to price new batteries. It was a warm day, so I piled the kids into the car and took them

along with me for the ride.

After the kids get to bed and after the dishes are washed and left to dry on the sink, the house is quiet. Too quiet, sometimes, when I think how fast little children grow up and leave home. But that's a long time away, especially for the little guy. Jean brought in the beer, and we turned on the Canadian station that doesn't have commercials. They were playing Victor Herbert.

"Well?" Jean, I could tell, was a little nervous. She'd had all day to think things over with the children not underfoot. "I see they took them, all right."

"They" and "them" were the bills and the people that had sold me the tire and the battery. "Sure," I said. "Nothing to it."

Jean put down her beer and looked me straight in the eye. "Mike, what you're doing is against the law. Do you want to go to jail, and do you want the kids to know their father—"

I stopped her right there. "You show me," I challenged her, "where what I'm doing is against the law."

"Well —"

I didn't let her get started. "In the first place, those bills are not counterfeits. They're just as real as though they were made right in Washington. They're not copies, because 'copy' implies that in some way they attempt to emulate the

original. And these don't emulate anything — they're real! Just as real as could be — I showed you that on the microscope and you agreed to that."

I was right, and she knew it. I was perfectly confident that even the atoms in the original bill and the duplicates were identical.

I had her there. She just sat and looked at me, with her cigarette burning away in the ashtray. I turned up the radio a little louder. Neither of us said anything for a while.

THEN she asked, "Mike, was anyone else in your family ever able to do this, anyone that you know for sure?"

I didn't think so. "My grandmother was always having some presentiments about things that came true about half the time, and my mother was always able to find things that were lost. My Aunt Mary is still having the wild and woolly dreams she's had all her life, but that's as far as it goes, if you except the fact that my own mother was born with a caul and when I was real small, before she died, she always used to insist that I would learn to make money just when I needed it the most."

Jean said, "What about that relative of yours that was burned alive in Belfast?"

I was insulted. "That was County Monaghan, which is a long way

from Ulster. And it was my great-grandaunt Brigid-Nora. And she was burned because her father was Spanish, and because she always had plenty of gold and food during the Great Famine; not because she was a witch."

"Your grandmother always used to say she was a witch."

"Logical way to reason," I said. "Brigid-Nora was from the Con-naught side of the family. You know, like the Walloons and the Flemings, or the Prussians and the Bavarians."

"Never mind your Irish history. You said your mother —"

"Yes, she said I'd have plenty of money just when I needed it most. But you're a mother yourself; you know how mothers feel about their offspring."

Jean sighed, and split the last bottle evenly between our glasses. "Your mother certainly knew her little boy. 'Just when you need it most!' Mike, if this doesn't work out I'm going to go back to work. I can't stand this — this no-meat, no-clothes, no-nothing diet any more. I can't take this sort of life much longer!"

I knew that. I couldn't take it much longer myself. Borrowing five here, ten there, driving a car that hadn't been in corporate existence for twelve years, getting gas and oil on a pay-you-Friday basis, wearing suits that — well, you know what I mean. I didn't

like it. And the two kids would wait a long time before they got to live in a house their father could buy on a foreman's pay.

Regardless of what they say in comic strips, I really proposed in the rumble seat of a Whippet roadster; otherwise, I hadn't been on my knees in front of anyone since I was a boy. But that night I just got down on the floor in front of Jean and we really had it out; all the things that people usually don't say, but think. I told her what I wanted and she told me what she wanted and we both made sloppy spectacles of ourselves. Finally we got up and went to bed.

THE next morning I was up before the kids, which, for me is exceptional. The first thing I did after breakfast was to call up my boss and tell him what he could do with his job. An hour after that *his* boss called me up and hinted that all would be forgiven if I reported for work on the afternoon shift as usual. I hinted right back for a raise and waited until he agreed. Then I told him what he could do with his job.

We sat out in the Kitchen for almost an hour that morning making duplicate ten-dollar bills, with Jean keeping track until we got up to two thousand dollars in cold, hard, green cash — more money than we had ever had at one time in our whole married or single life.

Then we dressed the kids and took a cab downtown. Shopping. Shopping for cash, with no looks at the price tags. Oh, Jean tried to sneak a look every once in a while, when she thought I didn't see, but I always ripped the tag off and stuck it in my pocket.

The bicycle and the scooter and the bigger things we had delivered; the rest we carried. The landlord's wife was immensely surprised when we came back home in another cab with the trunk full of packages; she wanted to express her sympathy over the sudden event that had caused us to go away in one taxi and return in another. Nothing serious, she hoped. We said no, it wasn't serious, and shut the door.

Well, that was the beginning. Two or three days of steady buying will buy an awful lot of clothes. In three weeks we had all we could wear and were thinking seriously of buying some things for the house. The stove we have was on its last legs before we bought it, and the furniture is all scratched and marred from when the kids were still crawling and spilling things.

But we didn't want to buy any furniture until we could find a place to live out in the country, and all the places we looked at in our Sunday drives were either too much or too far or too something. So I called Art's Bar, where I

hang out sometimes on paynights.

"Art," I asked, "do you remember that real-estate man that wanted to sell me that cottage before he found out I didn't have the money?"

Sure, he remembered. "As a matter of fact, he's here right now trying to sell me some insurance. Why?"

I told him I might want to see him about a new house.

"Then come on down and get him out of my hair. I need more insurance like I need more rocks in my head. You coming down here or do you want me to send —?"

No, I'd come down there. I don't want anyone except relatives to see the crummy place where I live. Even relatives like to rub it in.

The real-estate man — even if his name was important, I couldn't remember it now — had gone over to DeBaeker's grocery for bread. He'd be right back, Art said.

ALL right. I could wait. I asked Art for a short beer, and he slid it deftly down to my favorite corner. It tasted a little too cold, and I warmed it a bit with my hands. This mechanical refrigeration is all right when business is rushing, but when business is slow the beer in the coils gets too cold for my taste.

"Art," I said, "the paper isn't

here yet. What have you to read besides the *Neighborhood Shopper*?"

Art looked up from the cash-register tape. "I don't know, Mike. There's a whole bunch of mail I opened that I haven't had a chance to look at yet. There might be the last *Bar News* in there. Take a look for yourself while I see how much dough the night man was off last night."

He shoved over the morning mail. I used to help out Art every once in while to make myself a few extra dollars, and he knew there wasn't anything in the mail beside the usual advertising circulars, which he had no objection to my reading.

There was no *Bar News* there, and I idly turned over the pile, glancing at advertising puffs for spigots and coil cleaners and sham glasses. Then I saw it, and looked closer. I might add that I read everything, from streetcar transfers to medicine labels to the Men Wanted posters in the post office.

This particular circular was a copy of others that every small businessman gets from his post office or Federal Reserve District. This one was just like all the rest, with warning of flaws or errors or careless workmanship in the usual number of counterfeit bills always in circulation. This warning caught me where it hurt.

It said:

WATCH FOR THIS TEN DOLLAR BILL

Federal Reserve Note, Series G, serial number G 69437088 D. Series 1934 D, with 7 printed four lower corners on obverse of bill. Portrait of Alexander Hamilton.

THIS IS AN EXCELLENT COUNTERFEIT!

and can be distinguished at first glance only by above serial number on face of bill. Special warning to groceries and clothing stores; all detected so far have been from these businesses. It is thought that since so few bills have been detected these bills are only samples being tested for public reception. If you see one of these bills, detain the passer on some reasonable pretext and call . . .

and it gave the Federal Building telephone number.

THAT was enough for me. I crumpled up the circular and dropped it to the floor with my ears waiting for it to explode. Art rolled up the tape and dropped it in the cash drawer. I sat there, thankful I was sitting. My knees wouldn't have held me.

Art drew himself a short beer. "Find anything good?"

I managed to take a shaky breath. Anything good? Hell, Art was never going to know just how good, or how bad, I felt.

"Art," I said, "I want another

beer. Better give me something stronger with it." So I paid Art, got a shot and a beer, which I'm not used to, and sat back trying to get my breath back under control. I didn't realize how stupid I'd been until Art came back from the cash register with the duplicate ten in his hand.

"Here, Mike. You'd better take this ten back — pay me later, unless you want a lot of silver. Too early in the day for me, and the last two guys that came in had twenties. Okay?"

You bet it was okay. "Sure, Art. I know how it is." I took the ten from his outstretched fingers with a hand that quivered. "As a matter of fact, I shouldn't have given you that ten at all." You bet I shouldn't. "I've got the right change right here —" and I dumped a handful on the bar. "You better have one with me, yourself."

Art had another short beer; I finished my drink, and I went out to the car and sat in it and quietly had the male equivalent of hysterics. I made it home all right, and made it to bed without saying much to my wife. And then I lay there half the night, thinking.

Now, I don't consider myself to be a crook, nor did I want to be one. I hadn't thought about it too much because those ten-dollar bills looked too good to me and Jean. But I had a decision to make: was I going to go ahead with this, or

was I going to go back to the dog-eat-dog life I'd given myself and my family?

Money? Well, the Government prints it, sends it to the bank, and from there to the man who actually spends it. After passing through scores or hundreds of hands, each time acting as a buying or selling catalyst for the national economy, it wears out — the paper becomes worn or torn. Then it is totaled, shipped back to Washington, and destroyed. But not all of it.

Inevitably some would be lost, burned by fire or drowned by water, or maybe even buried in unknown pits by anonymous misers to rot in useless solitude. A billion dollars in crisp green currency would issue from the Mint, to return worn and foreshortened by thousands of missing dollars. Would it be wrong to replace some of those lost units? The Government would still have to replace no more than they had originally printed; the people that spent the money would suffer no inflationary loss of their savings; industry would get full value and possibly even increased sales.

THAT'S the way I had figured — no one would lose, and one family would benefit — mine. But now I had been proved wrong by some bank teller, by some sharp-eyed comparison of similar num-

bers. The innocents had lost when they had taken my duplicates, lost because all counterfeit money is automatically confiscated. Uncle Sam brooks no false images. Perhaps even some of my friends, some of my acquaintances, had lost because of me, and all because I had been stupid enough to use the same bill for all my duplicates.

The disgusted ceiling stared down at me and I made a mental note never to tell my wife. I'd solve this my own way, without getting her into it, and I went to sleep long after I had given up trying to find a way out.

When I got up the next morning, I duplicated a five-dollar bill.

It worked all right. There really wasn't any reason why I shouldn't be able to duplicate any one I wanted; it was just that the ten had been the first one I tried, and that only because it was the only one in the house. And it felt better to me to have a pocket full of tens than a pocket full of fives. I guess it would to most people.

When I made the first five, I looked through my billfold and took out all the fives I had, and made one more of each one. Then I went through Jean's purse and did the same. When I was finished, I had about a dozen copies, and about a dozen originals, and I felt rather proud of myself. I leaned back in my chair and began to figure the probability of some bank

teller's noticing that the numbers of two five-dollar bills were identical, if the bills came into the bank two days or two weeks apart.

Then the handful of bills and I went out to do my shopping.

I think the best thing to do would be to tell what I did for the next few months. The first bunch of fives I got rid of in different stores, one or two in each one. Every once in a while I would be able to convert four five-dollar bills into a twenty, or into a pair of tens. Then I would duplicate the bigger bill, and spend the original and the copy in two widely separated stores.

In two or three months I was in more business places, more bars, and more odd shops than I'd been in the past ten years. But I did have one bit of trouble; it got so that the clerks would good-naturedly wail when I went into a store, and complain that I must be a millionaire, because I never seemed to have less than a five or a ten or a twenty. I didn't like the idea of having attention called to me in such a way, even though nothing but pleasant conversation came out of it. So the only thing I could do was to spend a lot of time and traveling so that I hit the same stores as seldom as possible. I had a little black book with all the addresses I'd visited, with a note in my own private code

telling what I'd bought.

Every week or so I'd drop down to the bank and deposit what seemed to be a reasonable figure. And what a pleasant feeling it was to be able to walk into a bank with a bankbook and a fistful of money to put in! It was really the first time in my life that I had ever used a bank for anything else but a place to get money orders, or to cash in a savings bond that my boss had insisted I pay for with the pay-roll deduction plan.

It even got so the clerks in the bank would give me a big smile and say, "Business must be doing all right, Mr. McNally." I'd give them a pontifical frown and complain that the country was going to the dogs with high taxes. I knew that was what I was expected to say. Anyone who deposits every week, just as regular as clockwork, better than a hundred dollars is bound to complain about taxes. The more deposit, the louder the bellow.

And we bought a new car. Well, not exactly new, but it was only a year old. These big cars depreciate a lot the first year. The salesman who sold it to me must have thought he was pulling a fast one when he got rid of that gas-eater, but that didn't worry me any. The more gas it used, the more chances I got to get into a gas station where I could get rid of another bill. I

always had wanted a big car anyway. My old car I sold to the junkman, with a twinge of regret when he hauled it away with the fenders throbbing gently in the wind.

MY wife, who all this time never did find out about the mess I had almost gotten into with the original setup, had for the first time in her life all the clothes, all the household appliances, all the little luxuries she wanted. But she wanted to buy a house.

"Mike," she said, "there's a lot of houses around Twelve Mile Road. Let's get some place where the kids can play."

I told her no dice, and managed to make it stick. After all, I had just a little bit better than a down payment in the bank, and I didn't want to take any chances until I had the ability to take care of all the expenses that would be bound to arise with the purchase of a new home.

So we just stayed where we were, with the landlady's eyes popping every time we came home with something new. She tried to pump, but we don't pump very well with people we don't like.

There was one place where I had trouble, and it was the one place I didn't want it. Naturally, I couldn't stop going to Art's Bar. I had been going in there for years, and the last thing I wanted was

to have someone think I was going high hat. On top of that, I enjoy playing cards, and I like to drink beer. So I dropped in there just as often as I always did, and tried to think of answers for all the questions that were shot at me. When someone who's always been on the verge of bankruptcy — and most of Art's customers are that way; it was a family bar — suddenly shows up with good clothes and a new car and the ability to buy a

friend a beer once in a while, then questions are bound to arise. I told them I was doing this and doing that, and still didn't satisfy their curiosity.

Finally I called the man who'd been trying to sell me some more insurance for years. He came out to the house and gave me one of his high-pressure sales talks. I pretended to be taking notes of his figures, but I wasn't. I was checking his sales pitch. I bought some



more insurance and memorized a lot of the words and phrases he used. The next time at Art's when someone asked me what I was doing for a living I told them I was selling insurance, and went into the sales talk I'd memorized. They let me alone after that, apparently convinced.

Late in 1951 we bought our house. (We still live there, if you're curious. Drop in and see us some time, if you're ever around the

Utica Road, near Rochester. It's the big one on the far corner, near the golf course.) We paid spot cash for the whole thing, on a seventy-by-two-hundred-foot lot. The kids fell in love with it at first sight, naturally, and I think it was the slide and the swings in the backyard that did it. It didn't take long before they were just as brown as Polynesians, and it didn't take long before Jean was the same. She spent — and spends — more time



digging in the yard planting flowers than I do sleeping.

IT was really a wonderful life. We'd get up when we felt like it—in the summer, when the kids weren't in school—and sit around until we felt like doing something. When we found something to do we did it without counting out in advance what we could afford to spend. If we wanted to stay overnight in town we did it, and we stayed at whatever hotel we wanted to. And when we registered at the hotel we didn't have to ask first how much the room was, and Jean could go right into the lobby with me without feeling self-conscious about the clothes she happened to be wearing. It amused me a little when I figured that out; before we'd had enough money we used to feel self-conscious no matter what we were wearing, no matter how well we were dressed. Now we didn't care how we looked.

Once we registered at the Statler when we came back from a little ride to Tilbury, Ontario, and Jean and I and the kids were wearing shorts. We just went to our room, had a good night's sleep, had breakfast, and were home before we even thought of how many stares we'd collected in the glittering lobby. We thought that over, analyzed it, and began to laugh.

When the kids got out of school in the summer of 1953, we went

for a long trip, this time to Wisconsin Dells, and then to the Black Hills. When we got back, in the middle of August, the mailbox was full of the usual advertising, and after a cursory glance at the collection, I threw it all into the incinerator, which was a mistake. That was in August. In September we had a caller.

It was one of these Indian-summer days, with the breeze and the warm sun, and the overtones of the children playing in the yard.

"My name," he said, "is Morton. Frank Morton. I'm with the Bureau of Internal Revenue."

Jean almost collapsed

"Nice place you have here, Mr. McNally," he said. "I've always admired it."

I thanked him for that. "We like it, Mr. Morton. The kids like it here away from the traffic." I couldn't think of anything else to say.

He agreed. "As a matter of fact, my boy comes over to play here quite often."

I was surprised at that.

"You must have seen him," Morton went on. "Fat little fellow!"

I knew who he meant. "Little Frankie? Why, sure! He likes my wife's cookies. Doesn't he, Jean?"

JEAN said that reminded her of what she had in the oven, and excused herself to let me face the

music alone. I didn't mind; I'd always told her that all this was my idea, and I'd take care of whatever happened. I knew she'd be right out in the kitchen with her ear right up against the door.

"That isn't what I was after, Mr. McNally. This is just what you might call a friendly call, in a way."

I liked that. "Always glad to have you, Mr. Morton. You must live in that house across from the grocery store."

Yes, he did. "I say a 'friendly call,' but it's partly business. As I told you, I'm with Internal Revenue."

Into my throat again with my heart. "Internal Revenue. Oh, yes."

"You see, Mr. McNally, little Frankie has had so much fun playing with your children I thought I'd save you a little trouble. Since I live right down the street, I think the least I could do is to be a good neighbor."

I couldn't make out what he was driving at. All I could do was be polite, and ask him to keep talking. And he did.

"You see, since I work in the Bureau, a lot of forms and things pass over my desk. The other day the name and address on one looked familiar. I took a second look and knew it must be you. You're the only McNally on the street that I know of, so I thought I'd stop by on the way home from

work and tip you off."

Tip me off to what?

"Well," he said, "this was one of the regular forms the Bureau sends out. Apparently someone who has charge of your file sent you a letter asking you to come down and talk about a discrepancy in your tax return. And you apparently ignored the letter."

I opened my mouth to say something and thought better of it. Morton hurriedly went on.

"Now, Mr. McNally, I know you were gone most of the summer, and, since this is in my department, and since we're neighbors, I know that things get lost in the mail, and I thought I should drop by and tell you you must have never gotten any notice to appear. It might be a good idea for you to call in person, and explain what must have happened. It'd save you a lot of trouble, in the long run. Just tell them I stopped by on a friendly call."

He had more to say about that, but I think the situation really was that he didn't like the man who was in charge of my file, and wanted to warn me to get out from under before this someone really dropped the boom.

WE talked for a little longer about his boy and mine and the things people talk about when they've met for the first time, and he left with an apologetic smile.

He already felt he'd gone out of his way to mind someone else's business, and he felt guilty. I did my best to ease things, and Jean came out of the kitchen just before he left with a plate of cookies for Morton's wife.

We watched him go down the curving flagstone walk that had cost me two hundred duplicate dollars; we watched him walk briskly to his own house half a block away. I asked Jean if she wanted a cigarette. She shook her head.

"No. Not right now." She sat limply in the nearest chair. "Now what's going to happen to us?"

I told her I didn't know. But I'd take care of it.

She gave that short sarcastic laugh she saves for special occasions. "Yes, you'll take care of it. Like you take care of a lot of things. I knew you'd get in trouble sooner or later." She began to snifle.

I didn't know whether to get mad or to act sympathetic. When a woman cries, I don't think either one works. After I tossed a few words around I realized nothing was going to do much good, so I picked up my hat and went for a ride. I got into a card game at Art's, twenty miles away, where I hadn't been for some time. Art was so glad to see me he bought the house and me a beer, which, for Art, is exceptional. When I got home Jean was in bed pre-

tending to be asleep. I let her keep up the pretense, and went to sleep myself.

The next morning, bright and early, with my heart in my mouth and lead in my shoes, I was standing in line at the counter in the Federal Building. I told them what I was there for, and they passed me through three different hands and two different desks until I got to the man with my file.

The man had big ears and a bad disposition. His name was Johnson, and he made it quite clear that to me it was *Mr. Johnson*. He got right down to cases.

"You're lucky, McNally, that Frank Morton went out of his way to be neighborly, as he calls it. But that's neither here nor there. You haven't filed any income-tax return for 1951, 1952, *and* for 1950. Why?"

I wasn't going to let him get me mad, but I knew I could make him blow his top. I detest public servants with an inferiority complex.

"Well, Johnson," I said, "for a good reason. For 1952, 1951, *and* 1950, I had no income."

That was just the answer he was looking for, and wasn't expecting. He shuffled papers like mad, unable to believe his luck.

"Well, now, McNally," he said triumphantly, "that's a rather peculiar statement. You have a house that is assessed at eight thousand

dollars, and worth three times that. Right?"

Of course he was right. Taxes are low where I live, with the jet-engine plant paying most of the bills.

"And you have no income for three years, McNally, none at all?"

"Johnson," I told him sorrowfully, "I am a very law-abiding individual. I am quite familiar with the income-tax rules"—which I wasn't—"and I am also a very thrifty person. My wife makes all my suits and raises all our food. I don't need income, but to overcome boredom I am thinking of applying for a government job, in the customer-relations department. Anything else, Mr. Johnson?"

No, there was nothing else. But "you'll quite possibly hear from us a little later, McNally." When I left he was frantically scribbling away with a red pencil. I certainly wish I didn't have such a lousy temper, but in for a lamb, in for a sheep. All I could do was to wait for the wheels to roll over me, with Johnson pressing the starting button.

THE wheels rolled, and apparently missed me. We didn't hear from the Bureau of Internal Revenue all the rest of the year, and when next May came around Jean and I had almost forgotten. We decided it would be nice if we took a little trip, and found out

that to go to Europe it would be necessary to get a passport. We applied for one. That must have been the trigger that made someone think we were trying to get out of Federal jurisdiction. We got no passports, but I got a summons.

It really wasn't a trial. There was no judge there, and I had no lawyer. We just sat down in uncomfortable chairs and faced each other. There isn't much use mentioning any names, so I won't. It was just a meeting to see if things could be settled without a trial; most likely because trials take up time and money. They were fairly decent, but it boiled down to this:

"Mr. McNally, you have a house, a car, and a bank account."

The bank account wasn't big, and I mentioned that.

"Big enough for someone with no income. And we can prove—actually *prove*—Mr. McNally, that in the past three years you have spent for tangibles almost twenty thousand dollars. Your scale of living is and has been running at a hundred dollars every week—or better."

I could do nothing but admit it, and compliment their thoroughness. They were not impressed.

"So, Mr. McNally, that is why you are here now. We see no use in subjecting you to the inconvenience of a trial, with all the attendant publicity."

They waited for me to agree

with them, so I did.

"What we are primarily interested in, Mr. McNally, is not the exact amount of your income—although that is an extremely serious question, which must be adjusted to our satisfaction before this is all over."

That made me sit straight in the chair.

"Not so much in the amount, Mr. McNally, but the source. Just who are you working for, and how do you do it?"

Do what?

They were very patient, elaborately so. "How do you take the bets, Mr. McNally? How do they get the bets to you, and how do you pay off when you win or lose?"

"What bets?" I asked blankly. "What are you talking about?"

If you've never seen a collective lip being curled, you don't know what you've missed.

"Come now, Mr. McNally. Come now! We're all men of the world, if you want to put it that way. We know that you have a source of income. What we want to know—and we are *very* curious—is how you manage to run your business without using any means of communication we have been able to find."

They paused to let me consider; then: "We'll be frank with you, sir—we're puzzled. Puzzled so much that perhaps we can come to some sort of arrangement al-

lowing you to pay your past-due taxes without penalty."

I BEGAN to laugh. First I laughed, and then I roared.

"I suppose," I said, "that you're the source of all the clicks and static we've been hearing on the telephone lately. And I imagine you're the source of all these cars and trucks that have been breaking down within a block of my house." They admitted it with their faces. "And you can't find out how I take bets, and how I pay off. And I'll bet that you're our new milkman, and our new baker!"

They let me laugh myself out, and they didn't like it. One of the government men stood up and towered over me.

"Mr. McNally, this is no laughing matter for you. You came here under your own power, and you may leave the same way if you so choose. But there is one thing I can definitely assure you: that you will be back here under less comfortable, more formal circumstances just as soon as we have presented the evidence we have against you to a Federal jury."

That didn't sound so good to me, and they all saw it.

"Did you, sir, ever stop to think what would happen to your wife and children if a true bill were presented against you? Are you prepared to face the penalty for deliberately neglecting to file an

income-tax return for three consecutive years? You cannot, regardless of how you are communicating with your runners, conduct a gambling business from a jail cell. Had you thought of that, Mr. McNally?"

The income tax? Well, there was one slim chance—I hated to do it, but a chance was a chance. I knew I didn't want Jean to get mixed up in anything I had started, and I knew that with the thing out in the open there would bound to be some kickback that would affect the kids. And children shouldn't be exposed to trouble. They get enough of that when they're adults.

THE government men kept hammering at me and I kept thinking. A slim chance was better than no chance at all. Then they gave me my cue. Someone was saying: ". . . And you can't sit there and tell us you got all that income out of thin air!"

I broke in. "What did you say?"

"We were talking about the impossibility of your proving—"

"No. Go back a little. What you said about money out of thin air."

The collective smirk. "Let's not be too literal, Mr. McNally. We know you got the money; we want to know where and how you got it."

I told them. "Out of thin air, like you said." I slid out my billfold. "You might compare the

numbers on these bills," and I passed out a handful. "The best place in the world to get money is right out of the air—no germs on it that way."

So they checked the serial numbers, and they compared the bills, and they began to scream like a herd of frustrated stallions. They were still screaming when I left, under my own power.

Probably the only reason they let me go was because I was so completely frank about everything.

"Never mind where I got the money," I said. "You admit you couldn't tell one from the other. If you'll come out to my house tomorrow I'll show you where they came from; keep me here and you'll be no further ahead than you are now."

One of them suggested they could follow other leads and nail me in the end—even if it took a couple years.

"But wouldn't you rather clean this up all in one shot? You know I wouldn't get far if I tried to skip, and I have no intention of doing that. Give me a chance to get things lined up—no, I have no one working with or for me, if that's what you're thinking—and tomorrow you get everything out in the open."

I didn't try to lose the car that followed me all the way home. Then I talked Jean into taking the

kids over to her mother's the next morning, and drank three cans of beer before I could go to sleep.

THE next morning I was shaved, dressed, and breakfasted when Jean and the kids pulled out of the driveway, bound for Grandma's. I knew that they would have a tail of some kind, but that was all to the good. When she was barely out on the main highway, away from the house, according to agreement, the Marines would land. They did—two quiet, insignificant-looking little men I had never seen before. But I've seen too many movies not to be able to spot a shoulder holster when I see one.

They were extremely polite, came in as though they were walking on expensive eggs. I gave them a pleasant smile and a can of beer apiece.

They introduced themselves as Internal Revenue and Secret Service, and I blinked at that. What was the Secret Service doing here? He told me.

"Secret Service is charged with the responsibility," he said, "of detecting and handling counterfeited money."

Well, I knew it had been a slim chance. All I could do was ride the horse, now that I'd ordered the saddle. I cleared my throat.

"Well, gentlemen, I asked you here deliberately. I think the best

thing to do is to get this straightened out once and for all." Secret Service grunted. "And the best way to do it is make a clean breast of things. Right?"

"Right!"

I reached in my pocket. "Take a look at these. Are they counterfeit? Or are they good?" And I passed them a sheaf of bills.

Secret Service took them over to where the morning sun was glaring through the blinds and took a lens from his pocket. He stood there for quite some time before he came back to sit down.

I asked him, "Are they good, or are they bad?"

Secret Service grunted. "Perfectly good. Good as gold. Only they all have the same numbers."

"Fine," I said. "You probably don't get paid very much. Take them with you when you go." The temperature dropped forty degrees. I didn't have to be a mind reader to know why.

"No, I'm not trying to bribe you. I thought it would be a good illustration of what I said yesterday—that's right, you weren't there. Someone said that money doesn't come out of thin air. Well, this money did."

Internal Revenue believed that just as much as Secret Service, and said so.

I shrugged. "So you want a better sample?"

They nodded.

They had nothing to lose.

"How much money have you got on you? I don't mean silver, although I might be able to fix you up there, too, but bills. Dollar bills, fives, tens, twenties . . ." I tried to be funny. "Since you're not elected, I don't think you have any big bills." The joke fell flat, but between them they dug up about sixty dollars in bills of different denominations, and I spread them out as neatly as I could on the coffee table.

"All right, now; this is what I meant—" and I made sure that they were comfortably settled around the glass-topped surface. The first bill up in the right corner was a dollar, and I told them to watch the surface of the table right next to it. I looked at the bill and concentrated.

THE surface of the glass clouded, and the duplicate began to appear, nice and green and shiny. When it was complete, I leaned back and told the pair to pick up the dollar and its mate and feel free to examine them. While they had the new one over under the light, looking at it from all angles, I did a quick job on the rest of the money and went out to the kitchen for more beer.

They were so intent on the first one they never saw me leave. When they turned back to me I was sitting there with a cigarette, three

full cans, and an expectant smile. Then they looked at the coffee table and saw the rest of the duplicates.

Secret Service looked at the bills, at the ones he had in his hand, and at Internal Revenue. "Good God Almighty," he said, and collapsed into his chair.

It took some time for them to get their breath; longer still for them to be able to ask sensible questions.

"You probably won't believe me," I warned. "I still don't believe it myself."

Secret Service looked at Internal Revenue. "After that," he said, "I'll believe anything. Come on, McNally, you've got yourself into a mess. Let's hear you get yourself out of it."

That I couldn't go for. "I'm in no mess; you are. I'll make a million of those bills if you want, or if you don't, and all I can do is spend a few years in prison. Now, if I'm in trouble I'll stay in it. On the other hand, if you'll give me a clean bill of health I'll come across. Okay?"

Secret Service snorted. "My job is to nail the source of counterfeit money. Bud, you're all through!"

I kept after him. "Suppose you can say you've dried up the source. Suppose you can prove that to yourself, and your boss. Do I get a clean sheet? And do I get an okay for back taxes if I pay up?"

Internal Revenue hesitated. "Back taxes can always be paid up, with a penalty, if we think there was no criminal intent."

"And how about you?" I said to Secret Service. "Okay with you?"

But he was just as bullheaded as me. "No, McNally. You stuck out your neck, and chopped it off yourself. You'll make no more progress with U. S. Currency."

I kept right after him. "All you can get me for is possession of what you call counterfeit money. It looks good to me. Maybe the numbering machine stuck, or something."

"Yeah? No numbering machine in here. You made that stuff right here in front of my eyes!"

"Did I?" I asked. "Maybe it was just a magic trick. The hand is quicker than the eye, you know."

He was definite about that. "Not quicker than my eye. You made that money right here in front of me. I don't know how you did it, but I'll find out."

That was what I wanted him to say. "You saw me make money right in front of you? Without a printing press or anything? What would a jury say to that? What would they think about your sanity — and yours?" I turned to Internal Revenue. "And you still don't know how I did it, and you never will, unless I tell you.

Right? What do you say?"

Internal Revenue wagged his head and moaned. "Right, I'm afraid."

Secret Service swore. "You too? You want to let this — this counterfeiter get away with that? Why—"

I mentioned the old one about sticks and stones may break my bones and he snorted hard enough to blow the rest of the bills off the coffee table. No one picked them up.

"Well, how about it?" I prodded. "While you're thinking about it, I'll get another beer."

"Oh no, you don't!" he yelled, and tried to follow me into the kitchen. Internal Revenue pulled him back into his chair and leaned over. I could hear them whispering frantically while I pretended to have trouble finding the beer opener. I let them whisper for two or three minutes until I went back into the living room and found the opener where it had been all the time. I opened the cans and sat back. Secret Service had a face like Thor.

"Make up your mind yet?" I inquired. "I'd like to cooperate, but not at the point of a gun."

His frown grew darker. "Got a telephone? I'll have to get my boss in on this."

Internal Revenue winced. "Yes, there's a phone. I've spent three months listening in on it." While

Secret Service went to the phone to mutter briefly into it, I grinned. I know just how long Jean can talk to her mother saying absolutely nothing.

Secret Service came back and sat down. "He's pretty close to here. Five minutes."

We sat drinking cold beer until the boss showed up. Five minutes was a poor estimate. Three would have been better. I looked out the window and watched a telephone-company truck drop off an undistinguished repairman, and sit there with the motor running. Sharp babies, these Federals.

So we went through the whole routine again with the coffee table and the bills and I had the place littered with money before they all gave up. I began to wonder if there was enough beer.

THE boss said, "What guarantee have I that this will stop?"

I said, "When you find out how I do it you'll be your own guarantee. Okay—"

The boss said, "No. There are a lot of things to be straightened out first. For one thing—"

I snapped at him, "Let's get this straight. I'll tell you how I make the money. I'll give you the gadget to take with you so you'll know I can't make any more. All you have to do is promise never to prosecute me for what's gone by in the past. Now, there's no strings to

my offer — there'll be no more money made, and you let me alone for the rest of my life. If either of us ever breaks the agreement, everything is off and the other can do what he likes."

He jumped on one word. "Gadget! You make this stuff, really make it? It isn't just an optical illusion?"

I nodded. "I really make it, right in front of you, and if we do business you take the gadget with you right out the front door. Never again will I make a dime, and that's a promise!"

The boss looked at Secret Service and Secret Service looked at Internal Revenue. They all looked at me and I excused myself. When I came out of the bathroom they weren't too happy; the boss did the talking.

"McNally, God help you if you're lying. We'll cooperate, only because we have to. But, all right; we won't prosecute for anything you've done in the past. But, if you ever pull anything like this again, you're going to rue the day you were born. Just to show you I mean business, this could mean all our jobs. Counterfeiting is a felony, and we're letting you get away with it. Understand that?"

He barked out the words, and I knew he meant just what he said. But I meant what I'd said, too. I told him that was fair enough, as far as I was concerned.

"It better be. Now, start talking. How do you do it?"

I laughed. "I discovered it by accident. You can do it yourself. Here; this coffee-table . . ."

They looked down at it. "What about it?"

"You're the boss," I told him. "You do it first. Just put one of those bills on the glass and think about it. Think about how nice it would be if you had another one just like it. Think about where your next pay is going to go."

ILL give the boss credit. He hated to make a fool of himself, but he tried. He really tried. He took a bill out of his billfold and dropped it skeptically on the glass top. He shifted uncomfortably under the stares of the other two, and gave me one glare before he started concentrating on the money. Nothing happened.

He looked up at me and opened his mouth. I shook my head.

"This is no joke," I said softly. "You're the first one that knows this — even my wife doesn't," which was quite true.

He was game, and tried to concentrate. I motioned to Secret Service and Internal Revenue to move away with me, on the basis that the boss might find it a little easier without three men panting over him. We moved a few feet away and I took a sip of my beer.

I almost choked when I heard a

gasping from the boss. I eagerly bent over the table again. The same thing was happening; the mist, the green color, the final completed bill. The boss sat up and wiped his forehead.

"Uh," he said.

"Let me try that," said Secret Service and Internal Revenue, almost in unison, and they in turn bent over the table. The same thing happened.

They all sat back and waited for me to talk. I sat back and waited for them to ask questions. The boss asked the first one.

"How do you do it?"

I told him the absolute truth. "I don't know. I was just sitting here with my wife one night, glooming about what we owed, when she took out the last ten dollars we had. She flipped it on the table to show me how short we were going to be, and I just sat there moping about life in general. The next thing you know we had two ten-dollar bills. And that was it."

They all moved back and looked at the coffee table.

The boss said, "Where did you get this — this portable mint?"

"From my relatives," I said. I went on to tell him about the banshees and the leprechauns and he didn't believe a word of it. But Secret Service did. Later I found out his name was Kelly.

"So what do we do now?" said

the boss in an irritated voice.

"I told you that you could have the gadget," and I meant it. "I've got a home, a car, and enough money in the bank. I always thought I could write stories if I had the chance, and I've been waiting for a good one. I think

this is it. Take the table, and good health with it."

He looked at the table again. "And anyone can work it—anyone at all?"

"I suppose so. You just did it yourself."

Without an instant's hesitation



he smashed the muzzle of the gun down at the coffee table. There was an agonized tinkling crash that sounded feminine; and then there was nothing but brittle shards on the rug.

"Take this — thing outside," he commanded, and Secret Service carried the wooden frame of the table out on the front porch. The boss jumped on the skeleton until it shattered, and Secret Service himself brought a can of gasoline from the pseudo-telephone truck.

We all watched the wood burn until there were ashes that the wind carried away when I stirred them gently with my foot. Then they left together, without saying another word. I never saw any of them again; Kelly I recognized from his newspaper picture when he was promoted some years later.

SO that's the story. I never made any duplicate bills again; my promise made, the table destroyed, the ashes lost in the breeze. I write a little on the side occasionally, and with my limited talent I don't sell too many stories. It's a good thing I had money in the bank when the table was burned; money isn't as easy to get as it once was.

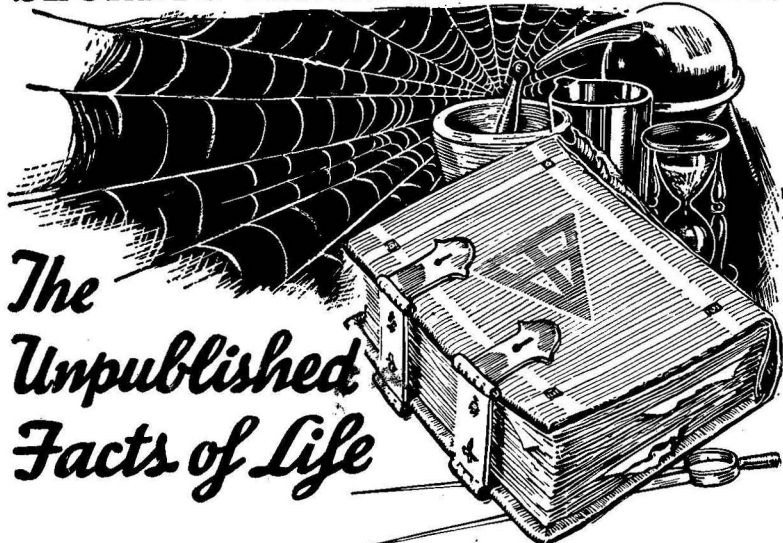
Sometimes I regret losing the coffee table — it was an old family

heirloom. And money was so easy to make when I had it, that life was a dream. But it's just as well that the boss smashed and burned it. If he had kept it for a while, he would have found out it was just a table, that I had made the bills while they were so intent on the money. It was my ancestry, and not theirs. But what they don't know will never hurt them. I kept my promise, and I'll go on keeping it. But I made no promises not to duplicate anything else.

Right now there's a lot of people engaged in the business of finding and restoring old automobiles. Next year I'm going to France to take a look at a Type 51 Bugatti. They cost forty thousand dollars to make twenty years ago, and there's only fourteen in existence. A fellow named Purdy who lives in New York would pay a good price for a fifteenth, I understand. And while I'm in Europe I'll just stop in and look at some rare books and stamps and coins. They tell me that's a good business, too — perfectly legal, and far more profitable than writing stories like this.



SECRETS ENTRUSTED TO A FEW



The Unpublished Facts of Life

THERE ARE some things that can not be generally told—*things you ought to know*. Great truths are dangerous to some—but factors for *personal power and accomplishment* in the hands of those who understand them. Behind the tales of the miracles and mysteries of the ancients, lie centuries of their secret probing into nature's laws—their amazing discoveries of *the hidden processes of man's mind*, and *the mastery of life's problems*. Once shrouded in mystery to avoid their destruction by mass fear and ignorance, these facts remain a useful heritage for the thousands of men and women who privately use them in their homes today.

THIS FREE BOOK

The Rosicrucians (not a religious organization), an age-old brotherhood of learning, have preserved this secret wisdom in their archives for centuries. *They now invite you to share the practical helpfulness of their teachings.* Write today for a free copy of the book, "The Mastery of Life." Within its pages may lie a new life of opportunity for you. Address: Scribe X.O.H.

The ROSICRUCIANS

(AMORC) • SAN JOSE • CALIFORNIA • U.S.A.

Scribe: X.O.H. The Rosicrucians (AMORC)
San Jose, California, U. S. A.

Please send copy of sealed booklet, "The Mastery of Life," which I shall read as directed.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____