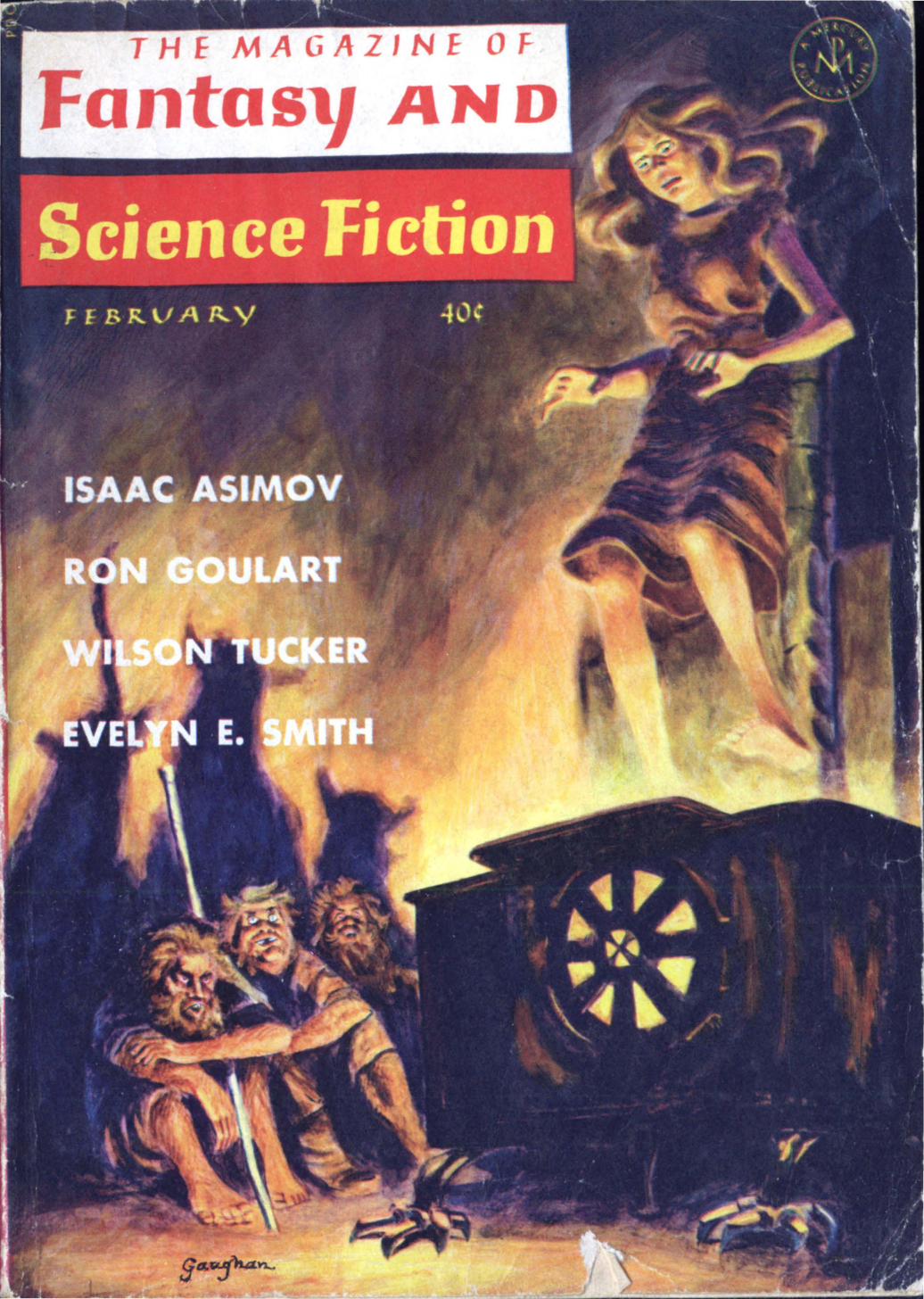

THE MAGAZINE OF
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FEBRUARY
40¢
ISAAC ASIMOV
RON GOULART
WILSON TUCKER
EVELYN E. SMITH
Gaughan

Fantasy and Science Fiction

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EDITORIAL



We are writing within sight of two mountains whose names, until recently, we could not even pronounce—the splendid shining cone of Popocatepetl, the magnificent snowy sierra of Ixtaccihuatl. The latter, the "white woman," was believed by the Aztecs to be the bride of the sun; and, indeed, bears an uncanny resemblance to the figure of a reclining woman: head, bosom, body, hands and feet, all covered in white. Her companion, "smoking mountain," was set there to guard her. Little guard was needed to keep away the Indians, whose religious awe alone restrained them—as it did, until too late, from resisting the Spaniards. Cortez, thinking in the terms of a different universe, knew a volcano when and where he saw one, sent his lieutenant, Diego de Ordaz, with nine men, to make the ascent: they ravaged the sacred and burning mountain and descended with enough sulphur to make gunpowder. The snows of Ixtaccihuatl remained unsullied. The record does not say if the sulphur was wrapped in fennel stalks like the stolen fire of Prometheus, or if eagles tore at the liver of the audacious Iberian. Probably not. In the confrontation of the conquistadores with the civilizations of Mexico and Peru we have a situation almost Science Fictional, the potent monarchs submitting in scarcely comprehending resignation, and all their millions of subjects, to the handfuls of men who might have well come from another planet—so alien were their weapons, their manners, and their minds. It is ironical that the Dukes of Montezuma, descendants of the Aztec Blood Royal, became and are still grandees of Spain. There are moments, and not a few of them, when the Conquest seems never to have taken place; when one sees the Indians emerging from their brushwood huts, huaraches on their feet, sarapes of ancient pattern wrapped about their bodies, drinking the immemorial *chocolatl* from tiny earthen pots . . . But then the antique and pre-Columbian silence is broken by the roar of the jet plane, and the elder design reveals, once again, that it has cracked into fragments of an almost infinite number. Standing on the threshold of space and all which that implies, it is well to be reflective.

—Avram Davidson



Introduction to S. S. Johnson's

THE HOUSE BY THE CRAB APPLE TREE

S. S. (for Simon Sigvart) Johnson was born in 1940 and made his first sale when he was eight, Lest aspiring and so-far-unsuccessful authors rush out like lemmings and drown themselves in despair, we add, hastily, that this sale was of a drawing—he didn't start writing for money until he was a ripe fourteen and began doing sports stories for the Hartford Courant. *In a letter to us last Spring, Mr. Johnson said: "After changing high schools five times in three years, I quit without graduating and went to college. Five years, five majors, and three colleges later, I am finally getting a degree this June, in technical journalism from Colorado State University. During this time I have worked as head soda jerk in a creamery, forest fire fighter, fire lookout, and research directory editor. After graduation, I plan to hit the road again. I have not made up my mind whether to go to Alaska, or down to Mexico. I have red hair, a red beard, and am single, and my second desire is to see the world. My first is to write." This story leaves little doubt that he can and will. Its impact is considerable; it is a violent story, but unlike most such, its chief impact derives from what it reveals of the* minds *of its characters. We do not now know if Mr. Johnson went to Alaska or to Mexico; we do know that he has a writer's eye and will produce good things wherever he goes. CAUTION: This story stuns, and is not for the squeamish.*



THE HOUSE BY THE CRAB APPLE TREE

by S. S. Johnson

RAIN BLURRED THE FARMHOUSE lying in the small valley. To the west rose the Forgotten Mountains and to the east lay low hills. Cottonwoods stood around the house and in the front yard grew a crab apple tree. Buds were forming on its branches.

The house was built of logs with some of the bark still on. Against the wall next to the door leaned a shed of rough-hewn boards. The house was still chinked in places with cement, but most of it had crumbled out and had been replaced with mud from the yard. Next to the broken concrete slab porch, a skinny sow rooted in the mud.

A woman pulled the canvas aside and looked out the glassless window at the gently falling rain. She could hear the sow grunt below the window, but she couldn't see her.

Saura wished vaguely that the rain would stop. If it kept up for another week, the growing season might be too short. A short season would mean poor crops, and poor crops would cause more people to hunt. She pushed the canvas back over the edge of the window and turned. But if more people came by, she thought, she would have a better chance to get a man for Verie. She frowned.

"Does it look like it's going to clear today?" Weed asked her.

"It seems to be clearing a little."

"Perhaps it'll stop tomorrow."

Saura looked at him. "We're getting low on wood," she said. Her mouse colored hair was cropped close to her head, framing her raw red face. She wore a blouse and skirt of heavy wool.

She stared at Weed, sitting on the bench at the table, but she didn't say any more for fear of angering him. Finally he said, "Tomorrow could be worse." He pushed himself up and walked past her. At the door, he took a stiff leather long coat from a peg, and shrugged into it. He grabbed his ax from the woodbox and pulled the door open and stepped out.

Saura walked to the opposite end of the table from where Weed had been, and sat. She picked up a potato from the pile on the floor and started peeling it with a knife

she took from the table. She hoped Weed wouldn't be long. She didn't like staying in the house alone with just Verie, especially in spring when people started to the mountains to hunt.

The house was low roofed with only the main room and the room in the shed. Across from the door to the outside was the cookstove, which they used to cook and heat with, and at the end of the room near the table was a stove to heat with, but they never used it. Wood was too hard to find. The main room still had a wood floor except between the door and the cookstove. The boards there had collapsed once, so they burned them and filled the spot with dirt.

Weed had been gone only a short time when Saura heard a noise in the yard. She jerked her head in that direction, set the knife and the potato on the table, and listened. She could hear the ordinary sounds of the rain and house. Then she heard it again. She ran toward the door. Before she could reach it, someone swung it open.

"Aha!" the man laughed. "Come to greet us?"

She backed up as others filed in, stamping the mud from their leather stockings onto the dirt floor. She looked at their clubs and knives, and tried not to seem frightened. She hoped Verie would hear them and stay in the bedroom.

Five men stomped into the room, all but one wrapped in wool and leather. The fifth man was dressed only in a leather skirt, and his skin was red from the cold. He had a leather collar around his neck with a leash tied to it. The man had no arms and from the smooth skin on his shoulders, he looked as if he'd been born without them. But what fascinated Saura was his face. Long straggly hair grew on his head and he had eyebrows but no hair on his chin the way all the other men she had ever seen had. And he had no eyes, and no place for them.

Saura realized she'd stared too openly when the first man laughed a deep vicious laugh and snorted loudly, "Hey boys, she likes Alice" and they all laughed. "Well, he won't harm you." They laughed in unison again, but when the first man spoke, they stopped laughing until he finished. "We fixed that." They laughed again. "Tell the lady you won't hurt her, Alice," he commanded. The others grinned, showing yellowed and broken teeth, waiting for Alice to speak.

Alice grinned, and Saura sensed a contagious animal fright in him that made her heart beat faster. "I can't hurt you," he said in a high pitched squeak, and all five roared.

Saura couldn't see anything funny, but she smiled slightly.

"We're cold. Get a fire going," the first man ordered. When Saura stood looking at him for a moment, he stepped forward and hit her with his fist. She fell heavily to the ground and he walked to her and kicked her gently in the side. "When I say something, I mean it."

She got up and opened the firebox on the stove and looked in. The heat of the slow burning wood warmed her face. Her hand shook slightly when she shoved the lid handle in to stir up the wood. "There is a fire," she said, standing back so they could see. the first one bent over and looked in.

He swore a word she didn't understand, and then said, "Look at that, boys, she's got a fire inside of this thing." They crowded around to look at it, except Alice, who only took a few steps forward because the man who held the leash pulled on it.

"That's a stove?" the first man asked. Saura nodded. He grunted. "What's your name?" he demanded.

"Saura."

"Saura." He grunted again. "I'm King." He turned and pointed to each of the others. "He's Knifeson, he's Longpole, he's Jay, and he's Alice." The men laughed when he pointed to Alice.

Saura had heard of the freaks, but Alice was the first she had seen.

"Knifeson, you look around in the house," King ordered, "and the rest look outside. Get that pig." He looked at Saura. "And you fix us something to eat with the pig." He glanced around. "I see you have potatoes."

"I was going to make them into bread."

"That's all right, we'll eat them the way they are." King walked to the table and sat on the bench. His face and hands were black with encrusted dirt, and his hair and beard were matted and greasy. His nose was wide and flattened against his face as if it had been pounded that way. He was bigger than the rest of the gang by half a head and he looked brawny enough to have cracked all their heads together at once.

Saura didn't know what to do, so she stood before him, looking at the floor. In a few moments, Verie stumbled into the room, pushed by Knifeson. He laughed when she tripped on a loose board and almost fell. He pushed her again. "Look what I found," he said.

Verie straightened and looked from King to Knifeson and back again. Saura was proud of her daughter for the way she stood up to them, straight, perhaps afraid, but willing to face them. Verie was dressed in wool clothing to match Saura's, and her face was clean. Saura clenched her fists in fear for her.

"What's your name?" King demanded.

"Verie," she said softly, her voice quavering a little.

A horrible scream sounded outside the window. Saura stiffened with the sound and looked at Verie. She tried not to let the fear show, but she could see from the look Verie gave her that she was afraid too. Saura heard the two men talking and laughing. Knifeson grinned at his own thoughts. Saura glanced quickly at him. He was fat and pudgy. Something about him made her fear him more than the others. She looked back at King, but he seemed to ignore the sounds. Jay and Longpole burst into the room. Longpole, a short skinny man, held the sow by a hind leg. Saura winced. The sow was young, small and skinny, and they had kept it in hopes of breeding it. The two men had slit open its belly and cleaned out the insides. "Here's something to eat," Longpole said. Blood dripped to the floor from the sow's half opened mouth.

"Where do you cook?" King asked Saura.

She frowned that the leader of the gang could be so dumb. "In the oven," she said.

He shrugged. "Let her cook it," he said, nodding to Verie. Longpole swung the dead pig into Verie, almost knocking her over. The four laughed, Knifeson the loudest.

Verie took the sow and tried to hold it away from her. "How shall I cook it?"

"Let me help you," Saura said softly. She took the pig from Verie and pushed her before it toward the stove. Saura didn't want Verie to start to show fear now. There was no telling what the gang might do if they thought she were afraid. Fear did something to animals, and Saura was afraid it might to the men.

"Leave the skin on," King said. "I like my meat juicy."

Saura looked at him but didn't say anything. Gangs had come before, and she knew what to expect. But none had found the farm since Verie had been too young to remember. She shoved the pig, hair and all, into the oven and closed the door. She would not have cooked it that way for Weed and them, but she reasoned that the gang wouldn't know any better. Weed, if he killed an animal, butchered it, and only let them eat a little at a time, so it would last. Saura whispered to Verie, "Don't talk to them any more than you can help. Do what they ask you." She searched her mind for something else to say, but she couldn't think of a thing. She wished she could say something comforting, but while the gang stayed, she knew there would be trouble. She couldn't even say how long they would stay. One gang, just after

Weed and she had found the farm, had stayed a month. They both still had scars—she pushed the memory from her mind, and shuddered. There was nothing to say.

"What's he?" Verie whispered, nodding toward Alice.

"A freak."

Verie nodded.

"Help me peel," Saura said out loud. They walked back toward the pile of potatoes. Saura felt the eyes of the men on them. "So you're Verie," King said.

Verie stopped and nodded.

"How old are you?"

"Fourteen."

King grunted. Saura noticed Knifeson grin at Jay. Her heart sank. Softly she prayed. It hadn't done any good before, but Saura could remember her mother telling her how, and that God always helped those who asked Him. That was before she was killed.

King scratched under his arm and looked around absent-mindedly. "Lie down," he yelled at Alice, who was standing next to the stove.

Saura sat on the floor against the wall and motioned Verie to sit beside her. Then Saura picked the knife off the table and tried to peel a potato. At first her hand shook, and she couldn't peel. After a moment, her hand steadied, and she peeled slowly to keep her mind off the men. She hoped Weed would hurry back, and at the same time she hoped he wouldn't. She had no way of knowing if he could help, and she didn't want him hurt. She didn't care for him, but he was easy to get along with, and he helped protect Verie. At least he had as long as Saura was around. She was careful not to leave him alone with her.

The soggy sweat smell of the men's drying clothes mingled with the ham smells that began to fill the room. Saura watched the men nod sleepily. After a while, each lay down on the floor and went to sleep. But King showed no sign of even being tired. As he sat on the bench, leaning against the table, he closed his eyes but continued to scratch. Saura vaguely considered him as a match for Verie. He was strong, and would be able to take care of her. He smelled bad and was dirty, but that didn't matter if he could keep her from being killed, and wouldn't kill her himself. She was trying to think of a way to put the idea in his head when Verie interrupted.

"Where did Dad go?"

"To get wood," Saura answered quietly. She stopped peeling and looked at Verie.

"What do they want?" Verie asked.

"First they want food." Saura paused and took a deep breath. "Then they'll want you and me."

Verie looked down and frowned. Saura wasn't sure that Verie un-

derstood. She didn't know how much her daughter knew.

"Why do they lie around?" Verie whispered. "Why don't they take what they want and leave? I don't like them here. I want them to leave."

Saura watched Verie lift her head up and look at her and plead with her eyes. Saura looked down. She couldn't meet her eyes. They seemed to accuse her of not doing something to make the men go. But she felt that the best thing was to humor them, to get along with them, the way she did with Weed, until maybe she could control them without their knowing, to get what she wanted for herself and Verie. "I'm afraid they won't leave until they've eaten everything there is to eat and done what else they like. There's so many of them. Usually they don't travel in such a large gang." It was too hard to find food for too many, she knew. When Verie had gotten to be about four, Weed had talked over the advisability of killing her because of the food. Feigning indifference, Saura had pointed out that there seemed to be enough for three, and Weed had grown fond of her, so he forgot the idea. One winter they almost had to kill her so they would have something to eat, but they got through all right.

Now Saura hoped a man would come to live with them for Verie. He could help with the planting and hunting. Then they would not have to be so afraid of starving to death because Weed had not been able to find enough in the summer to last. And a man would keep Weed away from Verie.

Saura hoped none of the gang would scar Verie and make her so ugly that a man wouldn't want her. King seemed like a decent man. When he hit her, before Verie came into the room, he hadn't hit her hard. It had almost stopped hurting. Knifeson was different though. Saura looked at Knifeson, sleeping on the floor. Even in his sleep, he seemed mean and cruel. He was fat while the others were thin, which meant he hogged more food than the others. He seemed to enjoy pushing Verie around, too. Saura didn't like him. He made her afraid.

King stood and stretched. Saura watched him at the edge of her vision as he walked softly over the sagging floor and reached into the pile of peeled potatoes and grabbed one. He swore a word Saura had never heard before and then said, "You're too slow. Peel faster." He walked carefully back to his seat. Knifeson stirred at a creak, but none of the gang woke. King sat and bit off a chunk of potato and started chewing. When pieces fell on his beard and lap, he picked them up and shoved them back in his mouth. When he finished, he picked over his clothes and stuck in his mouth the few crumbs that he found.

Time seemed to pass slowly, and Saura finished the potatoes. She stood, picked up the potatoes in her skirt, and motioned Verie to follow. As they passed near him, King opened his eyes, but he didn't speak. Saura stepped around Alice, who was snoring in front of the stove. After she opened the oven door, Saura set the potatoes on the bottom to soak up the juices that dripped from the pig. She pulled some rags from a peg on the wall and used them as pot holders to turn the pig so it would cook evenly.

After she turned the pig and put more wood on, she sat on the floor close to the door and as far from the freak as she could get. Verie sat facing her, but didn't say anything. Saura was not as frightened as she had been, because she was tired of being frightened. It looked as if they were not going to eat either Verie or her, so they would be all right until Weed came back. She hoped he would stay away. She was sure now that they wouldn't hurt her or Verie too badly as long as King kept control, and she didn't want Weed coming to complicate matters. Then again, she wasn't sure. She feared what the gang might do because there was nothing to hold them back. Saura could remember her mother warning her. Rape was what her mother feared most. She used to tell Saura stories about girls left so weak after a gang finished with them that they couldn't move, and near the ruins the dog packs finding them, or in the country the wolves.

Saura shuddered. Then she heard Weed stamp his feet on the concrete outside the door.

Alice sat up, hitting his head on the stove. King jumped up and kicked Jay awake. The four men picked up their weapons. Jay and Longpole had clubs carved from tree limbs. Jay's was short and squat for killing, and Longpole's was long for catching. King and Knifeson had knives. King's was almost a foot and a half long. The other was only half a foot long.

Saura jumped to her feet and pulled Verie away from the door. She thought to yell, but she had lived too long trying to get along. She thought first, who was going to win, and then she kept quiet.

The door opened wide and Weed started to step in, a cottonwood log on his shoulder and his ax in the opposite hand. Saura noticed that the log was big and would last for several days.

Jay swung his killing club but Weed ducked his head. The club crashed against the log. Weed's knees buckled, but he slipped the log from his shoulder and shoved it at the gang and managed to keep his feet. He jumped backward, away from the door into the rain.

Longpole jumped over the log

as it hit the floor. The others got around it. The log rolled onto Alice's foot, and he screamed, but he pulled his foot out and was quiet.

Saura maneuvered so she could watch the fight through the door. Longpole swung his club as he went out. Weed stepped back out of the swing and then forward, swinging his ax. Longpole managed to get his club out to parry the blow, but the ax head hit the club and splintered it. His club slowed the ax enough so he got out of the way as the other three piled at Weed.

Weed jumped back off the porch into the mud of the yard. The men circled warily. Every few moments, Weed would jump forward and try to kill one of them, and Saura would bite her knuckle. She wanted Weed to win, for Verie's sake, but she was afraid what he might do to her for not warning him of the gang. Weed swung at Jay, and King jumped in while he was off guard, but Weed managed to back off before King could cut him.

Saura could almost feel the fear in Weed, feel him backing, afraid of moving too fast for fear of slipping in the mud and knowing that if he slipped he was dead. She could feel the rain hit his face, mix with the cold sweat, and run in his eyes. For a moment she was sorry for him, but it was too late. Then she saw Jay jump, swing the killing club, and Weed jump back, swinging the ax, and Saura saw his mistake.

King jumped forward and Weed couldn't get his ax up to ward him off. Saura stiffened and grasped her side as she watched the knife slip to the hilt in Weeds' side. She could feel the steel cut, as if some rainwater had gotten under his coat, and she watched him slip, and fall. The strength seemed to leave Saura too, as she watched. Weed screamed once as Knifeson cut again but the man ignored him. When he screamed again, Jay bashed his head with the club. When they finished, they picked up his clothes and started back to the house.

Saura looked at the body lying under the crab apple tree, and then turned from the door. "Let's check the pig," she said to Verie. They were turning it when the gang came back.

". . . Teach her not to warn us," Knifeson was saying.

"Later," King ordered.

"He won't bother you anymore," Knifeson snarled to Saura, and the other man laughed. Alice heard them laugh so he laughed, but the others had stopped. His laugh sounded strange by itself.

When he stopped, Saura could hear the rain fall on the roof and run down. It sounded like water on the stove that had just begun to boil. "The pig is half done," she said to break the silence.

"Let's eat then," King said. Jay grabbed Alice's leash and followed the others to the table. Alice sat on the floor behind Jay's place.

Saura took a wooden slab that Weed had made and put the pig on it and set it on the table in front of the men. She left the potatoes in the oven, hoping the men would fill up on pig so she and Verie could at least eat something.

Saura watched the men carve the pig as she lit two tallow lamps. They smelled greasy, but they lit the room enough to eat by. Then she closed the damper to cool the stove a little and to keep the wood from burning so fast. She sat on the floor in front of the stove and motioned Verie to sit beside her. Then she watched the men eat, and listened to the grumbling of her own stomach. King cut off one of the hind quarters. Then Knifeson hacked off the other. When they each had their piece, they handed their knives to Longpole and Jay, who cut off front quarters. When Longpole finished, he jabbed the knife into the rib cage and left it there while he knawed on the half cooked meat.

Jay kept the knife he had and sliced pieces off the back of the pig and threw them to Alice. When Alice felt a piece hit him, he felt around with his feet until he found it. Then he held it between his feet, and leaning over, tore off bites with his teeth.

Saura was repulsed and at the same time fascinated. All the men ate noisely, chewing with their mouths open and shoving the food back in when it fell out.

When King finished his first bone, he threw it to Saura. "You can have this," he said.

Jay and Longpole each threw a bone toward her, but Knifeson dropped his at his feet and ground it back and forth into the floor with his heel. He didn't look to see if anyone were watching, he seemed to do it just for the enjoyment of knowing that when he finished with it, no one else could have it. Saura hated him then, and feared him all the more. She picked up the bone King threw and gave the other two to Verie. The meat that remained was cold and raw, but she hadn't eaten since morning and it was better than nothing.

How can I get King interested in Verie, she wondered, so he'll keep her to himself? Now that the men had slept and eaten, unless they slept again, they would turn to other things. She wondered how Verie would take it. If she fought, they might make it a lot harder on her. She hoped the gang wouldn't torture them. She thought of praying, and just in case it might do some good, she said a prayer to herself so the others wouldn't hear.

"Let's have some music!" King ordered, interrupting her thoughts.

Knifeson dropped the bone he was working on and ground it under his heel as he turned and looked at Saura and Verie. "Let's," he grinned.

"Sing to us," King said, pointing a rib bone at Saura. "You must know some of the old songs. I like to hear the old songs."

"I only know one," Saura said. Verie looked at her, and Saura could see that she was beginning to get frightened.

"Sing it!" King ordered.

The song was one that Saura's mother used to sing occasionally. The words didn't make any sense to her, but she supposed that they had in the old days. She started singing, "Boo-pop, a-loo-pop, za-boom-pop, a-loo-pop," over and over the way her mother sang it.

"Hold it!" King ordered. "That's a good song to dance to." He pointed the rib bone at Verie. "You dance."

Verie looked at her mother. "But I don't know how to dance."

"Don't know how?" King looked incredulous. He looked at the others. "We'll teach you," he said. They laughed. Saura's hope to save Verie from what was coming fell. King didn't seem interested in Verie for himself at all.

"Stand up," King said.

Verie looked at her mother again. Saura nodded and looked at the bone in her hand. What could she tell her? She'd find out soon enough anyway.

Verie stood.

"Lift your left foot." Verie did. "Right foot. Left. Right. Left, right. Sing!"

Saura sang, "Boo-pop, a-loo-pop, za-boom-pop, a-loo-pop."

The men chanted, "Left right, left right," faster and faster.

Suddenly Verie stopped. "I can't go that fast," she said stubbornly.

"I teach you," Knifeson growled, jumping to his feet. King smiled, but the others laughed.

Saura saw there was no hope for saving Verie for just King. He wasn't interested in a girl to himself. She had to try. "Wait, she hasn't—"

Knifeson kicked at her. "Shut up!" he snarled.

Saura tried to duck the kick but the foot grazed her head and knocked her down. She sat back up and shook her head to clear it.

"All right," he sneered. He lifted Verie to the top of the stove and stood her on it. "Now dance."

"Right. Left. Right, left, right, left," they chanted and clapped their hands. Saura couldn't understand why they should want to torture them. None of them seemed particularly vicious except Knifeson, but King was the leader. Why did he let them? What could she do?

"Sing!" Knifeson shouted at her.

"Boo-pop, a-loo-pop, za-boom-

pop, a-loo-pop," Saura sang in time to their chanting.

"Louder!" Knifeson roared.

"Boo-pop, a-loo-pop, za-boom-pop, a-loo-pop."

"Right, left, right, left," faster and faster. "Right, left, right left rightleftrightleft."

Saura continued singing but she no longer heard the words nor saw the men. A roar filled her head that seemed to scream, why are they doing this, why doesn't God help, why doesn't anyone help, until something fell on her and knocked her over.

"Kill him!" she heard someone snarl, and all the men seemed to be running at her and something twanged in her ears and then they stopped. Saura realized that Verie had fallen off the stove onto her.

"Hold it!" someone shouted.

Saura looked around, trying to find out what happened. King lay on his face in front of her, a dark stain growing on his back, and the others stood still behind him.

"Whose house is this?" someone behind her demanded.

Saura twisted around to see who it was. She had never seen him before. He looked something like the others, except his dark beard and hair were trimmed close and he didn't look as dirty. He held a bow and arrow pointed at the gang. "It's ours," she said. "These men came this morning and killed our sow and Weed, Verie's father."

The man looked at the others and after a pause, said, "You better leave. I want some sleep under a dry roof tonight."

The men grumbled and started to pick up King's knife.

"Leave the weapons here," the man ordered. "And while you're at it, strip him and leave his clothes."

Saura looked at the men. She saw hate fill their faces and a touch of fear, too. Being outside on a cold rainy night without something to cut firewood with would be hard and dangerous. Saura noticed the strength and self confidence in the voice of the man who was in control. She feared him a little. He had killed King and was chasing the gang off by himself. She hadn't been able to control the gang at all, how could she hope to control him? She cuddled Verie in her arms and turned toward the man. "Can I take her to the bedroom?"

He nodded, and made way for her to walk past. Saura stood, holding Verie, and walked into the bedroom in the shed. In the middle of the room was a large bed with heavy wool blankets on it. Saura lay Verie on the bed and pulled the blankets back. Then she picked up her daughter's feet and looked at them. Saura's hands shook a little as she ran her fingers over the raw flesh. She leaned over and kissed the sole of each foot, and pressed her eyes shut to

keep the tears back. My poor baby,' she crooned to herself. She slipped the feet under her blouse and pressed them to her breasts to cool them. My poor baby, she crooned. The feet were hot and rough on her skin.

"If I catch you around in the morning, I'll kill you," Saura heard the man say in the other room. Then she heard the door open and the board floor creak as the men walked out.

"But we'll freeze to death," she heard Jay plead.

"Keep walking," the man answered.

Then she heard Knifeson call from the outer edge of the yard, "We'll be back." A chill of fear settled in her stomach. She lay Verie's feet on the bed and pulled the blankets over her. Saura leaned over her daughter's face and kissed her on the lips. Then she turned and walked into the other room.

The man wasn't there. She walked to the door. Snow was falling and a thin coat lay on the ground. The man was tying his horse in the shelter of the angle between the shed and the house. Saura wondered why he didn't bring it inside. Didn't he know that the wolves would smell the blood of the dead men in the yard and would come and kill his horse? She watched him unsaddle and place the saddle next to the wall out of the falling snow. He picked up his saddle blanket and his quiver and carried them inside and placed them and his bow on the shelf next to the door. Then he turned to Saura.

"I'm Saura," she said before he could speak, "and the girl is Verie, my daughter. Thank you for chasing them off. She's never been with a man before."

He frowned. She wondered if he was interested. She had thought of a way to keep him, but she couldn't make up her mind if he would be a good one to keep. She didn't want someone who would eat either Verie or her if the winters were too long.

"I'm Ted Brace," he said. "I'd like a place for the night and something to eat."

She smiled slightly. "That's a funny name," she said.

"It's not half so funny as Saura and Verie."

She quit smiling. She wondered if he was going to be as bad as the gang. "We've still got some potatoes," she said. "They left some pig." She looked at the remains of the sow lying on the table. "I can heat it if you like."

Ted smiled slightly. "You better save the pork for breakfast. If the potatoes are hot, I'll eat them."

"If you wait a few moments, I'll check." She turned and walked out the door and to the window. She stood the wood cover for the window on its end, and started lifting it up to fill the window. If

the wolves came, she didn't want them coming inside. She shoved it against the logs and held it for a second with her knee. In the distance, she heard a howl. She could barely hear it, but it sounded like a man being tortured. She wondered if the people wolves ate stayed inside the animal and that was what made them so mournful. Before she could lift the cover again, it was lifted from the inside and set in place. She walked back to the door and paused before going in. She shuddered a little, to think of what would happen to the horse. Then she walked inside and took the wood bar and set it in the irons to hold the window cover in place, and did the same for the door.

She stopped then and looked at Ted. "Thank you," she said.

"That's all right."

She shrugged and turned to the stove and replaced a lid that had been kicked out when Verie fell. Then she opened the oven door, reached in, and squeezed one of the potatoes. "They're ready to eat," she said.

Ted walked to the wall at the end of the table and pulled out two arrows that were sticking there and put them with his others. While he was at the shelf, he pulled his leather rainshirt over his head and set it next to the bow and arrows. He turned and sat on the floor in front of the oven and picked a potato out. He motioned Saura to sit beside him as he took a bite. "That your husband out there?" he asked.

Saura nodded. "That was Weed."

"What happened?"

Saura quietly told how the men had come after Weed had left for wood, and what had happened until the time that Ted had stepped inside and shot King.

"Shall I bring him in until we can bury him?" he asked around a mouthful of potato. A piece fell on the floor and he picked it up and threw it into the woodbox.

Saura watched him throw it, feeling the hunger in her stomach. How wasteful he is, she thought. She couldn't decide what to do. If she had him bring Weed in, he might get suspicious, and bring the horse in. If she didn't Weed would get eaten by the wolves. She shrugged. "He'll be all right out there, I suppose." Now if Ted still wanted to bring him in, he could, but he would be deciding for himself. She looked at the stove leg to avoid his eyes. The leg was shaped like an eagle's claw, clutching a naked head.

"Where did you come from," she asked.

"I've been riding down from the north."

"From the north? Nobody comes from the north in spring."

"Well I did." He said it with such finality that she couldn't argue with him, but she was sure

that nobody lived farther north than they did. Ted reached for another potato. "You want one?" he asked, offering it to her. She took it from him and started gnawing on it.

"How did you find the farm?" she asked.

He shook his head. "It was beginning to snow so I was looking for some shelter. I saw the trees here, and when I got closer I saw your light." He took another potato. "I wanted to see the ruins. My grandfather used to tell when I was little how they looked before and after the fight, he'd seen 'em both times, and I wanted to see for myself if there really were a place like what he described. I started early because I wanted to get back to the ranch before winter."

"There's not much to see anymore," she said.

He looked up from his potato. "You been there?"

"I was born near there and we used to go there to see if we could find anything we needed."

"What are you doing here?"

"Weed stole me a long time ago. He brought me here because he thought it would be far enough north to keep away from the gangs. We didn't think anybody could live farther north."

Ted finished the potato, and wiped his mouth on his sleeve. "That's enough," he said, "I want to sleep now."

He stood and started arranging the clothes that he found lying around the two rooms into a bed in front of the stove. Saura was surprised. She expected him to sleep in the bed. She was waiting for him to ask for it. Then she was going to tell him that he'd have to sleep with Verie, because her feet were too burned for her to sleep in front of the stove as she usually did. Then he'd see how nice she was and would stay. It was even more important for him to stay now than it would have been if Weed hadn't died. Saura walked into the living room and blew out the candle. She picked up Verie's bedding and carried it to the stove and dropped it on the bedding Ted had already arranged. "Verie usually sleeps there until we get up, then she goes into the bedroom," she said. "She's never slept with a man."

Ted looked up from arranging the bedding and smiled at her but he didn't say anything. She held the second lamp high for him as he crawled between the layers. When he was under except for the top of his head, she blew out the lamp.

Saura set the lamp on the shelf next to the door to the bedroom, but instead of going through, she stood still, letting her eyes grow accustomed to the dark. She was puzzled by him. She wished he hadn't killed King. If it had been Knifeson, she would not have

minded. She wasn't sure but that he might be worse than the gang. She couldn't understand him. He didn't hit her or shout, and he didn't seem to want either her or Verie. Vaguely, she felt it was an insult, but she didn't know what she could do about it. Perhaps he is the answer to my prayer, she thought. Verie was tortured, but not very much. Perhaps God just takes time to work. Saura could only remember some of the things her mother had told her about God, and she didn't pretend to understand. Maybe you have to pray a long time before what you want, to make sure that you get it. He must be from God. After all, he said he came from the north, and that's impossible, because it gets too cold further north for anyone to live. She remembered Weed telling her that when they decided to take over the ranch.

In the light that shone through the cracks around the door to the firebox, she could see Ted's shape under the bedding. She wondered, should she kill him while there was a chance? No telling what he would do when he got angry. He didn't seem too hungry for potatoes, he might be saving himself for one of them. As she stood, her eyes grew more accustomed to the dark, until she could see almost as well as if the lamp had been burning. If she killed him, she could bring the horse inside, and Weed too. There was a lot of meat on that horse. It was the first one she'd seen that someone could ride, although she had heard that lots of them ran wild somewhere to the east.

He had saved their lives, maybe, she thought. But that didn't mean much. He had killed King, the best of the gang. Here was her chance to get rid of the last man that would bother her. She looked across the kitchen to the shelf where she kept her two knives. One had a foot long blade. That would be the one to use. Hate welled in her. She could hear her mother scream long ago as that gang used her for their purposes. Saura wanted to run and help her, but she remained hidden and safe. She took a step toward where the knives were. She could see them rape and kill, and her heart beat hard as she relived the running she did when the gang left, and then finally when she came back to pile rocks on the remains, a dog pack was there. She watched, unable to turn away. Then Verie's face seemed to come between her and the dogs. Saura frowned. Ted wasn't interested yet, but if she killed him, he never would be. Verie needed someone to protect her. She had to have a man for that.

Her hands relaxed. She had balled them into tight fists, but thinking of Verie relaxed her. Besides, if Ted were from God, and she killed him, wouldn't God be

angry? The fire flashed up and died down as she stood wondering. Finally she shrugged her shoulders. She supposed that if he meant them harm, he would have done some already. She turned and stepped into the doorway. She looked back at Ted. He groaned in his sleep and stirred uneasily. When he settled into sleep again, she walked to her bed and crawled in beside Verie. The bed was warm and Saura shivered comfortably.

In the blackness just before dawn, Saura woke. She jumped out of bed and stepped quietly to the doorway. The horse whinnied, and she could hear growls. She saw Ted heading toward the door, a club in his hand.

"Don't go out," she shouted. "It's the wolves!"

"My horse is out there," he growled, flinging open the door.

Saura saw something fly at him out of the black. He managed to knock it down as another came at him. Saura picked up the lamp and ran to the firebox and lit it. The light shone beyond Ted into the yard. It was alive with black shapes. The horse screamed. Saura ran to the door. No man could fight that many wolves. She watched for an opportunity. Ted smashed the club onto the skull of one wolf as another leaped at his face. He threw up his arm as the shape knocked him backward. He fell and rolled, kicking at it. Saura slammed the door and replaced the bar. She turned to look at Ted. He had regained his feet as the wolf rushed in. It was too fast for him to get a full swing but he managed a short blow which knocked it to one side. He jumped back and swung the club over his head and sent it crashing into the wolf's skull. Its head smashed, and the body flipped over and lay still.

Ted whirled toward the door, but when he saw it was shut, he sank to the floor. His breath came in gasps and his face was pale under the beard. He lay back and tried to relax. "Thanks for shutting the door," he said.

"I was going to shut it behind you," she said. "One man can't fight off the wolves." She wondered if he were just stupid or if he were brave. The horse screamed once more, and Ted tried to stand, but all he managed to do was sit up. He must really like that horse, Saura thought. She shrugged. Well, he couldn't leave now. She built up the fire and prepared the wolf for skinning. After a while, the growling and rustling outside grew quieter.

"What are you doing that for?"

Saura looked up at him, puzzled by his sharpness. He was frowning at her. "It's meat, isn't it?" she asked and went back to skinning. After a pause, he got up and took the knife from her. She stood up and backed off, watching

him skin. He took the skin off with swift, sure strokes, even though she knew he found the job distasteful. Wolf meat's tougher than some, she thought, but it's better than none. By the time he finished, daylight had come. He stopped and stretched, rubbing his neck.

"Do you want me to cut it up?" he asked.

Saura nodded, and watched him start to cut it into pieces that would cook well. She walked to the door and opened it to look out. The morning was bright, and all the rolling hills to the east that she could see were covered with shallow snow. She looked at the front yard. All the snow was tromped into the mud. The wolves were gone. She stepped out. She had gotten what she wanted. He was stuck at the farm. He wouldn't dare leave by himself. Verie would have a man.

Here and there on the mud lay a bone or part of a bone. The front porch where Ted had fought was covered with mud of a darker color than the rest, as was the spot where the horse had been. She stooped and looked at the saddle. The wolves had chewed it to the point where Ted couldn't have used it even if he had a horse. Saura shook her head. The only sign that wolves had been there were the foot prints covering the mud. She walked to a spot under the crab apple tree and looked at the darker mud. That was all there was left, darker colored mud.

Suddenly she wanted to be with someone, away from what she had done. She turned and walked back to the house. She stepped inside the door and shut it behind her and leaned against it.

Ted looked up from his cutting, "Someone coming?" he asked sharply.

She shook her head. She wished he hadn't spoken that way. She walked to the stove and warmed her hands over the firebox. She couldn't explain her feeling, she just wanted to be with someone who was alive and whole and warm, not like Weed or King. Being alive in any condition was better than being outside in the mud. She shivered and moved closer to the stove.

"You knew that wolves would come, didn't you?" Ted asked after a few moments.

Saura wondered what he would do if he knew why she did it. She didn't know what to say. Finally she said, "They sometimes do."

"If you knew, why didn't you have me bring in your husband?"

She looked at Ted, and the thought of her own mother came to her. "It gives them something to eat so perhaps they'll stay away from the rest of us," she said after a long pause. She shrugged. "It saved burying him." She would have buried her mother too. But she was afraid.

"You could have eaten him," Ted said.

Saura shrugged and didn't answer. She and Weed had eaten a visitor once or twice when times were hard. It was them or maybe Verie or herself. But she had a vague feeling that she couldn't have eaten Weed unless she were very hungry. "He was probably too tough anyway," she said, unable to think out the real reason.

She started to fix some food as Ted walked into the living room. She glanced at him out of the corner of her eye and he didn't look happy. She wondered if she could get him to get some wood. Cooking the whole pig had burnt a lot, and they were still low.

She gave Ted potatoes to eat, and took some into Verie and fed her. When she returned, Ted had his gear assembled on the floor and was straightening the feathers on one of the arrows. "I'm leaving in a bit," he said.

"By yourself?"

He nodded, looking up at her. She read in the disgust in his face that she would have gotten him to stay easier if she had warned him about the wolves.

"What about wood?" Saura was so surprised, she mentioned the wood without meaning to. She hadn't wanted to say it outright. She wanted him to think it was his idea.

"What about the wood?" he asked.

Saura decided to ask him. "We're almost out of wood. You wouldn't leave us without any wood, would you?"

Ted looked down at his arrow. Saura could see that he wanted to leave. If it were she, she would have left, but he was different. She was sure he'd do what she asked. She wasn't sure why, but she was beginning to get used to him. It seemed strange, not to fear him. He was different.

"Let's go," he said, standing and walking out.

Saura picked up the ax and ran to catch him to lead the way over the first two hills to the north. While she walked, she thought about what made him different. The main thing was that he wasn't going to hurt her, unless there was a good reason for it. He realized that his horse died because she hadn't warned him, and although he was willing to fight the wolves for it, he didn't even strike her. After they reached the downed cottonwood, she thought about it while he chopped. Any of the others she ever knew would do almost anything if the mood hit them. Even Weed would beat her if he felt like it, just to show her who was boss.

After cutting enough to last Saura until warmer weather, Ted swung the ax into a log, and leaned against the cottonwood trunk. "Tell me about the ruins," he said.

Saura shrugged. She couldn't see why he was so interested in the ruins. "I haven't been there in about fifteen seasons," she said, "and I've been told they've changed a lot."

"What were they like when you were there?"

Saura looked at the horizon, trying to remember. "They were big, some of them very high, but what was strange was that they stretched for miles and miles, the low ones anyway." She paused for a while. "I could never see how that many people could feed themselves, or how they could live so close together. It seems to me that they'd always be eating each other."

"I don't see why they should. Quite a few people live on the ranch with us and we never eat anyone."

"Not even in the longest winter?"

He shook his head.

Saura looked at him and frowned. "What's living on a ranch like?"

"Twelve people live there now that I'm gone. We always had enough to eat because we had lots of cattle and sheep. Before he died, my grandfather rode to the ruins and got lots of bows and arrows and even some crossbows and guns, so we've never had to worry about gangs. Besides, we're too far north for most of them."

"What's a crossbow?" The other thing he mentioned meant nothing to Saura. She couldn't even think of what he called it.

Ted raised his eyebrows at her. She could see he thought she was dumb. "It just shoots arrows harder than regular bows."

"You said your grandfather was to the ruins before the fight. What were they like then? My mother used to tell me that they were like Heaven, but she wasn't born until a long time after the fight, so she only knew what her mother told her. She used to say that God caused the fight, and be sure and pray every day that it doesn't happen again."

Ted frowned. "I don't think God started it," he said. "Grandfather said that the leaders of this country and another started it."

"Why?"

Ted shook his head. "He never knew."

"What were the ruins like?"

"He said there were so many people, I could never count them. They were always riding around in metal carriages—we've got some at the ranch but they don't run anymore—and they always had enough to eat and a place to sleep. They never worried about getting hurt because they got together and agreed to certain rules."

"If it was so nice, why did they fight?"

"I don't know." Ted sounded annoyed. "Why did that gang kill your husband?"

She thought about it for a second and then dismissed it with, "My mother used to say that some men believed in God and they were good. Others didn't and they were bad."

Ted scratched his beard for a few moments before he said anything. "I don't believe that. My folks never said anything about God, but they weren't bad."

"They must've been," Saura stated.

"Then what's good and what's bad?" Ted asked.

Saura chewed on a knuckle. She was sitting on the row of logs that Ted had cut, with her legs folded under her skirt. Finally she said, "You're good, and the men in that gang were bad. The men in the gang did things for no reason. You don't."

"I'm helping you for no reason."

"That's different."

"How?" He paused for a moment, but Saura couldn't think of a reason. "Those men killed your husband. They had a reason. He had something they didn't, and they knew he wouldn't give it to them. So they killed him."

"There are some things you just don't give away."

"You've been trying to give away your daughter."

Saura hit her knee with her fist. "They tried to rape Verie and me. You didn't."

"I could just as well have raped you. Nothing stopped me. But I didn't need to. You were trying to give it away."

Saura chewed her knuckle, trying to straighten the ideas in her mind. She rather would have known about life on the ranch. She was not yet convinced that there was a ranch like Ted described. Weed had told her that no one could live to the north, and he wasn't often wrong. She looked at Ted's face, with its sharp features, black from the sun. She wasn't sure that some one as stupid as he seemed would be a good match for Verie. "Would you have offered to share everything you had with them, if you were Weed?"

"That's got nothing to do with it."

Saura knew then that he would be all right for Verie. "You didn't try to rape us, so you're good."

"They didn't either."

"They would have," She saw that she had pushed him too far. He jumped at her and slapped her face hard with his open hand. She uttered a cry as she fell from the pile of logs. Ted followed her over the pile. He grabbed her legs and jerked her flat on her back. He reached to her blouse and tore it over her head, exposing her breasts. Then he stood, holding the blouse.

"I could rape you now," he said.

"Why don't you then?" she asked. She knew that if he did, he

would help them afterward. She didn't try to move from where he had jerked her.

Saura stared him in the eyes for a moment. Then he threw the blouse at her face. She jerked it away and watched him walk to the other side of the log pile and sit there. Then she pulled the blouse on and followed him. "If you're not good," she said, "why didn't you rape me?"

Ted shrugged his shoulders. "I didn't want to, that's all. It has nothing to do with good or bad. Nobody's good or bad. Only weather's good or bad."

"Maybe . . ."

"Let's carry some of this back," he said, standing and motioning to the logs. He shouldered his bow and quiver, picked up three logs, and started walking through the mud.

Saura lifted one, and balanced it on her hip while she picked up the ax. Then she hurried to catch up. When she reached him, she had to hurry to keep up, so she didn't try to talk. She tried to think of a way to get him to stay or at least take them with him. She wanted a man like Ted around. She felt safer. He hadn't harmed her, even if he had killed King, so he was good, she felt. If only Verie's feet had not been so burned, she could have sent her into the kitchen to sleep with him. He didn't act as if he would have liked the idea, but Saura felt that if Verie had climbed in without clothes on, he would have gotten used to her. That might have kept him for a while, or maybe he would have taken them both back to his ranch. That sounded nice. She wasn't convinced that there was such a place where there was always enough to eat, and people didn't have to worry about gangs. It sounded too much like the descriptions she had heard of the ruins before the fight. But if there was such a place, she was sure that people like Ted would live there. Anyway, it would be nice to leave the farmhouse.

A jackrabbit jumped at Ted's feet. Saura watched it run in long low hops up the rise in front of them. When it reached the top, it stood on its hindlegs for a second and looked at them. It took a hop down the other side but stopped and stood to look that way. Then it turned and ran at a right angle to the way it had run.

"You said the ruins had changed," Ted said suddenly. "How are they different now?"

Saura didn't answer for a second. The rabbit bothered her but Ted's question distracted her and she forgot about the rabbit. "We were told a season ago by a hunter that except for two tall buildings, all the rest have crumbled. He said there was nothing left except miles and miles of piles of stone and dirt with weeds growing on them."

They reached the top of the rise that the rabbit had stopped on, and started down toward the farmhouse. Saura walked in silence, trying to think of a way to get him to stay. The only thing of value that she had to offer him was Verie, and she had a feeling that he wouldn't like being offered her.

She reached the porch a step after Ted, and stepped up as the door opened. Knifeson stepped out. He had a long club in his hands.

Saura looked at Knifeson's grease covered beard and slime streaked grinning face and saw the face of the dogs that ate her mother and the wolves that ate Weed. The strength left her arms. Run! she thought. She saw Ted throw the three logs, and turn to run, fighting to get the bow off his shoulder. Knifeson laughed as he knocked the first log aside with his arm and jumped out of the way of the others. Verie's man was going to be killed! Saura leaped at Knifeson, digging her fingers into his face, tearing at the dogs, the wolves, her fear. She didn't feel the blow, but she found herself lying in the mud. She heard bone crunch, and the running stop. She knew then. She had failed Verie.

"Get in and build a fire," Jay snarled. He jerked her to her feet. "We're hungry."

Saura glanced at Knifeson tearing the clothes off the body under the crab apple tree. She turned and walked to the kitchen and knelt in front of the stove and started feeding pieces of wood into it. She heard the bed squeak. Outside, Jay and Knifeson laughed. Between laughs, she heard grunts from the bedroom.

As the fire grew, she stared into it, and as she stared, ideas seemed to settle into place in her mind. She would bury Ted, and that would make up for the others. Ted had told her of the ranch, and it was as if God had come to tell her about Heaven. The sounds of the men no longer had the everlastingness that they had had before.

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P. M. Hubbard now lives in the English county of Dorset, a place ancient of days and tradition. Later comers to its hills and dales found the inhabitants worshipping a god which they called Essus, whom the Romans knew as Cornus (or, Horny), and breeding a type of sheep which had—and still has—the rare and useful quality of coming into oestrus all year round. There are those who think that King William Rufus, the Conqueror's son, on a fatal day in August calculated by the breeding cycle of sheep, offered himself as a pagan sacrifice; there are those who think that this "old religion" is not gone even now from England's green and pleasant land. Mr. Hubbard tells us of a winter uncommon severe, when snow lay deep and thick and cold on the sides and slopes and summits of the downs of Dorset, "full of dead men and buried gods."

THE SHEPHERD OF ESDON PEN

by P. M. Hubbard

THIS IS AN OLD PART OF THE country. The chalk uplands, where most of our sheep-walks are, have been occupied continuously for six thousand years by more or less highly organised communities, not counting the savages who were there before them. It was the pagan Saxons who left the hill-farms and settled in the valley-villages we live in now. But that, on a long view, is not much more than yesterday.

The downs are empty now except for the sheep. Sheep have been a specialty in these parts for a very long time. There is a famous carving in the church here. Its dating is disputed, but it was done in any case not far one way or the other from the days of Duke William. There is a flock of sheep, recognisable as an early version of the local breed, and a hooded shepherd with a crook. The guidebooks call it a quaint portrayal of Christ as the Good Shepherd. The archaeologists, who tend to take a more cagey view of the dedication and use of these early churches, have their reservations. The pastoral staff, they say, even in its

earliest manifestations, has no business to be twisted like a serpent and topped with a ram's head, and if you hold the light sideways, the shepherd's hood looks too like horns for comfort. But there is no disputing the sheep, or their attitude. Whatever the artist had in mind, he knew a good shepherd when he saw one.

Speaking for myself, I never did doubt that the archaeologists' hesitation was justified, but then I am what passes for an educated man and I am also, without putting too high a value of my performance, a church-goer. Most of the farmers round here are neither the one nor, to be honest, very much the other. I accept it as established that generations of older gods had been worshipped on the sites where the Christians, as the latest-comers, built their churches, and that for a surprisingly long time the old forms of worship went on in parallel with the new, despite the Christians' dogged and ingenious determination to absorb and adapt whatever they found it impossible to eradicate. But as I see it, holy ground is holy ground, and more, not less, holy for having been hallowed to different gods over, humanly speaking, very long periods of time. I don't see that that makes me a pagan. And even if it does, surely it is better to see holiness too widely scattered than not to see it at all.

Some of my neighbours do go to church on occasion. Also, unless I am very much mistaken, some forms of worship still go on not far from here which the Church would not countenance at all. But the bulk of the people are neither Christian nor pagan. They tend to get along without being either. When they do go in the church, they will recognize the shepherd and his sheep as such. Who he represents, or by what name he should be called they will not, I am afraid, think all that important. The sheep are what matters; and the sheep are there because the downs suit them, as they have for centuries. A new and fiercer agriculture is pushing further and further up the slopes of the downs as mechanization improves and the government raises its subsidies; but the tops remain largely inviolable. They are full of dead men and buried gods. But that would not worry the farmers, if the gradients were a bit less steep or prices a bit steeper.

I have said all this by way of preliminary to give you the chance, if you want it, to say that what followed was my imagination. And it is true, I admit, that only I saw the thing itself. Jack and Sam, who were with me, might be got to admit that there was something a bit queer, especially Sam. Jessie, of course, knows much more about it than I do, but I cannot call her as a witness. Dogs are bad liars, but cannot be questioned about

their experiences. But I am getting ahead of my story.

It started to snow the night after Boxing Day. We never get real snow in these parts as a rule. When we do have a fall, it is a two-days wonder, something to make a good story of. This time it went on. We were still waiting cheerfully for news of the inevitable thaw, when an east wind came up like a personal message from the Kremlin, and before we knew what was happening we were drifted up and the stock in danger. A week or so later people were writing to the papers reminding each other of the great winter in Lorna Doone and saying there you are, Blackmore was right, it could happen. By then we already knew it could. It had. And we were worse off than Blackmore's farmers. We had given up our horses and our personal strength for tractors. Not even a tractor will go through a ten-foot snow-drift, and we hadn't, that I could see, any John Ridds capable of carrying a sheep under each arm through deep snow. Whether it is the tractors or the National Health Service, we don't come that size any more. But we had to do what we could, and that still meant men and dogs and shovels, and dig out and get home somehow whatever sheep we could find alive.

As bad luck would have it, most of ours were up on Esdon Pen, which is one of the highest and wildest points hereabouts. I took Sam Gibbs and Jack Ferrier and Jessie, my black-and-white bitch. We took what we thought we should need, including, of course, shovels. We looked like an Everest expedition, except for the goggles, and before we were half-way up we were wishing we had more of their equipment. It was not snowing for the moment, but the sky was the colour of tarmac and the wind went through everything we had on.

We reckoned the poor brutes would have got over on the lee slope and were probably all together somewhere. But you could not tell even where the ridge of the hill was. There was a long spine of snow, carved in fancy curves by the wind, but the shape of the hill itself, which we had all known since childhood, was not there.

It was frightening. Not reasonably, because we could see the village below us, and on any sensible reckoning we could get down where we had got up. But it was frightening. Nature, or something, which in these parts we reckoned to have got buttoned up some centuries ago, had suddenly broken out and got on top again. I did not think all this out at the time, and I am sure Jack and Sam did not, not half-way up the Pen, with our backs pouring sweat and our hands dead to the wrist. But I

think that was what was frightening us. At any rate, we stopped trying to make a joke of it. Our voices got a bit edgy and we avoided each other's eyes, not wanting to see in them what we felt in our own.

The top felt like the roof of the world, and the country, which most of the year is green and rounded and so rich you could eat it on bread and butter, looked like the wrong side of the moon. All along the south, in the gaps of the white hills, a black sea reached up to the iron-grey sky. Like most farmers, we did not have much truck with the sea, but we knew there must be poor devils out there fighting nature, or something, in an even more outrageous shape than we were.

I sent Jessie off, and she went bounding through the snow drifts, like a dolphin in a dead white sea, not barking, but keeping up a running commentary of professional noises. If anyone could find the sheep, she could, though what there could be to smell in that frozen horror I did not know. The three of us spread out and began working along what seemed to be the lee side of the crest, trying the drifts with our sticks.

I do not know how long this went on. There was a sort of desperation in it, and speaking for myself, being a good deal older than the others, I could feel nervous and physical exhaustion not very far ahead. We were half way along the ridge when Jessie began to howl. It was horrible, up there in all that snow, with the sound coming back to us fragmented by the wind. Our three heads went up together, like cattle, and we started to flounder towards the dog. When we were quite close to her, the air went white round us and it started to snow again, big flakes and very close together.

We came on her under an almost vertical wall of snow. She was standing straight up on her hind legs, up to her hocks in the snow, pawing at the air in front of her with her head thrown back. She howled at regular intervals. I have never seen anything like it.

We unslung our shovels and started to dig. We soon had quite a shaft, one man digging, one standing by and the other back at the entrance, trying to keep it clear of fresh snow. Jessie kept up a stream of noises unlike anything I had heard from her before. Every now and then she would dart in under the shovel and scratch frantically at the snow with her forefeet, sniffing. Then she would back off suddenly, throw her head up and howl, standing up on her back legs and pawing the air with her front. We all pretended not to see anything extraordinary in it.

From being white and fluffy at the top the snow got denser and less white as we drove into it. It

was hard work, and we changed about more often. There was a sort of phosphorescent dusk in there under the snow. There were no shadows, but we could not see very clearly. The one thing, of course, we had not thought of bringing at that time of day was lights.

I think it was when I was standing by that I noticed that Jessie had stopped howling. I was leaning on my shovel, half-way down the shaft, trying to get my breath back, when I suddenly noticed the silence. I wondered what she was doing, but could not see her. I went out of the shaft, and the wind caught the sweat on my face and neck like a whiplash. Jack was out there fighting back at the drifting snow. I said, "Where's Jess?", but he did not hear me. I went up to him and shouted. He stopped shovelling and we both looked round. He saw her first.

She was nearly a hundred yards off, barely visible in the falling snow. She was going hell-for-leather down hill for home. We could not hear anything at that distance, but her mouth looked wide open. She went plunging through the drifts, and at every plunge her rump heaved into sight. Her tail was so tight down between her legs that it must have been brushing her belly.

I went back into the shaft and caught my breath as I got inside. Something was not right. It could be sheep, but I did not think so, not quite. Of all things, what my memory threw up at me was old Mrs. Kibbet's room when I was a boy. She took to her bed twenty years before she died and never opened a window till they pulled the cottage down after they had buried her. I tugged at Sam's sleeve. He was shovelling away like a madman.

I pointed in the grey shadowless light. I said, "That's not snow you're shifting, Sam. That's chalk —rotten chalk." He stared at me, jaw-dropped, like a lunatic. I peered at the whitish face in front of us. As I looked, a whole patch fell away at our feet, and a puff of air went past us, quite warm and staler than anything I could have believed possible. I stepped back and fell over Sam.

We both sat down, there in the trodden snow of the shaft, with our shovels between our knees and our mouths open. I was conscious of a blind urge to get out into the blowing snow and at the same time the appalling conviction that any sudden movement might bring down the whole curtain of soft chalk in front of us.

I don't think either of us took his eyes off that blank wall of crumbling chalk. Without a word said, we began simultaneously to ease ourselves backwards, still sitting, along the slushed snow of the shaft. We must have looked pretty comic, except for the expression on

our faces. When we were about two yards clear of the chalk face, we stuck, side by side. Sam panicked first. He rolled over on his face and scuttled out on all fours, leaving me entangled with two shovels and a fall of snow. I got to my feet, crouching and scarcely breathing. I began to back out, and saw something black on the floor of crumbled chalk. It was shiny with a sort of ageless patina and so warm it steamed slightly in the cold air from the shaft. I thought it moved. At any rate, the loose chalk fell away from it for a moment, and I saw clearly the serpent curve and the carved horns on the head. Then, as I looked, it was drawn, quite deliberately, back in under the chalk.

I do not remember getting down the hill. The snow had stopped falling, but it was almost dark, even with the whiteness everywhere. It must have been near noon. By the time we came into the village, the three of us were together again, and Jessie came running from under a hedge, crying and lashing herself with her tail and trying to get under the skirts of my coat. I do not think any of us said anything.

There was a light in the post office and Jim Bugler came out. He farms down at Withyscombe on the far side of Esdon. He said, "I've been trying to phone you all the morning, Mr. Pinhey, but the lines are down, so I come over. I've got your sheep in my yard—nigh on sixty of 'em. Can you get 'em out, sir, do you think? I can't do nothing with 'em, they're in everywhere."

I said, "How did they get there, Jim?"

"Search me," said Jim. "Must have come down off the Pen during the night before the snow come down heavy. But someone must have brought 'em. There's no gates open."

I did not follow that up. I had no rational explanation to offer, and Jim Bugler was not a man to be offered irrationalities. "I'll come and get them," I said.

I sent Jack and Sam off and called Jessie. I turned into the lane by the vicarage and made for the church. Jessie would not come inside. She put first one foot and then the other on the stone threshold, whimpering, and then backed off, as she does with the fender when the fire is too hot to get near.

I left her and went inside. It was dark, but I knew where the lights are. For the second time that day I looked at the double curve of the serpent crook. The shepherd's face was worn to nothing, with the hood, or whatever it was, standing high above it. But as you often get them in mediaeval art, the animals' faces, clustered round him, were almost ludicrously full of human expression. There was no mistaking the expression.

It was adoration. He was a good shepherd, all right. He was lord of all beasts, but beasts with horns and hooves were his special children.

I stood for a minute, knowing something was required of me, but uncertain what. I raised my hand and touched my forehead in salute. I did not see what else I could do. Then I went outside to comfort the almost frantic Jessie.

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OUR FUZZY MOON

by Theodore L. Thomas

SOME SAY THAT A MAN WILL BE walking around on the surface of the moon within the next ten years, and they may be right. If they are, it will be handy to know what to expect. A lot of technical people think that the surface of the moon is covered with a layer of dust so deep that a man or a ship might disappear in it.

A man at the Geological Survey, Charles Warren by name, noticed the nature of the reflected light from the moon's surface. The reflection is primarily of the type known as reflex reflection, and this is pretty unusual.

There are three types of light reflection. First, there is diffuse reflection, the type you get when light bounces off a painted wall; light goes every which way. The second type is specular reflection, the type you get from a mirror. The third is reflex reflection in which the light bounces right back to its source even when it hits the surface at an angle. A reflex reflecting surface normally has to be built by men, usually by putting tiny lens elements on a flat surface. Motion picture screens often have reflex reflecting characteristics to brighten up the reflected picture. And the moon, while having a fair amount of diffuse reflection, also has a surprising amount of reflex reflection.

Charles Warren says that dust doesn't account for it. He settled down to a study of the possible geometry of the moon's surface. First, he needed a structure with open space in it. Second, the units of the structure had to be linear—long and thin—to account for the openness. Third, the orientation of the units had to be random so that the same properties would occur under light from all angles. There seemed to be but one good answer. The structure of the moon's surface had to correspond to a mass of material in the shape of long thin sticks, like matchsticks. The name Charles Warren coined for the configuration was "skeletal fuzz."

Nothing like the skeletal fuzz is known on Earth. Warren thinks it has to be inorganic, and probably originated from the bombardment of rock by the protons from the sun. Couldn't possibly be organic. After all, nothing can live on the moon.

But funguses grow by shooting out long, slender filaments called

mycelium. And corals grow by building a skeleton of silica or limestone. There is no known organism that combines the properties of funguses and coral—no fungral anywhere. If there were, it might just be that it would produce a structure like that postulated structure on the moon. Fungral might build a lunar reef. Since the lunar structure has no earthly counterpart anyway, it may not be too wild to visualize it as the unlikely result of a crossbreeding of two terrestrial organisms. Our fungral loves extremes of temperature, the absence of air, good siliceous rock, and earthly scientists to baffle.

MS FOUND IN A BOTTLE WASHED UP ON THE SANDS OF TIME

I built a machine to travel through time,
To travel those shoreless seas
    to take me back on the time-past track,
With a carbine between my knees.

It has often been said, and I have been led
To believe that it cannot be done
    to hit the time trail where the chronons wail
And carry a murderous gun.

How they laughed at my plan, and to a man
Have said, "Why should we bother
    to hear the schemes of a man who dreams
He can murder his own grandfather?"

Enjoy your laughs, you herd of calves!
The laugh will soon be on *you*
    for I'm leaving now on my Temporal Plough
With a gun that's ready and true.

The turbines whirl and the helixes twirl
And the Time-Light flashes green!
    but with a sudden boom like the crack of doom
Appears ANOTHER machine!

There's a pistol's bark— and I'm the mark
And death fills me full in a burst
    and I moan as I go . . . now I'll never know . . .
Because grandfather shot me first . . .

—HARRY HARRISON

A communicative reader rather grumpily complained, recently, that too many of our stories "read more and more like rejects from The Pelican,—" *This stricture could not have applied to LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, which appeared in our April 1952 issue: a parody on Science Fiction letter columns, it had been* accepted *by* The Pelican*—humor magazine of the University of California at Berkeley—and whose then editor was, curiously, the item's author. Ron Goulart has written many stories for us since then, all distinguished by the same dry, subtly underplayed wit. Mr. Goulart, who sometimes looks like a man-about-town, and sometimes like a pirate, adds to his already secure reputation (we can turn as neat a phrase as any) with this subpended account of Arlen Lembeck of the world of tomorrow and his misadventures in search of a Purpose.*

NOBODY STARVES

by Ron Goulart

THE STRAIGHT FALLING RAIN blurred the glass wall of the cubicle and Arlen Lembeck could not see any of the billboards that dotted this sector of Greater Los Angeles. Or maybe it was his eyesight. He'd been docked a 100 calories for missing punchin last Tuesday and he had the feeling his new eating program was affecting his vision. He leaned back in his chair until the headrest was a half inch from the headrest of his cubicle chief and picked up the ear trumpet that fed into Secretary Central.

The quota of subliminal outdoor billboard slogans for Cubicle 97 of the Greater Los Angeles Subliminal Outdoor Bureau was 25 this week. Going over quota could mean 10 more calories a day and a membership card in one of the new Venusian import warehouses. Lembeck didn't understand Venusian imports but Edith was still upset about the calorie cut and something like this might boost her feelings.

Though he was 34 and only a Class B14 Lembeck was a good slogan man. The *Cubicles 90-100*

Newsletter had mentioned him twice in the last month.

"Touching," said Burns Smollet, the cubicle chief.

"Sorry," said Lembeck. Accidentally his chair had ticked against his chief's.

Smollet was only a week past his 31st birthday. He was a B10 and had been for six months. Of course he'd been given credit for his Propaganda Corps Reserve time. Edith was not up on protocol and Smollet's age and rank bothered her. Smollet was a pretty fair slogan man, though.

A small pink card slapped out of the In slot and landed face down next to Lembeck's left hand. Absently, like a confident card player, Lembeck turned the punch card over. "Report 8:45 tomorrow (the 25th) for Termination Processing," it read. "Wing 6 of the Pre-Termination Board, Hollywood & Vine, Greater Los Angeles, Sector 28. Thank you for the interest you've shown."

Lembeck swallowed. "They can't fire me on a Wednesday," he said.

"There was a memo to that effect last month," said Smollet. "Are they?"

Lembeck held up the pink card. "I have to turn in all my cards, food and everything, and go back to the Employment Complex." He had been with the Outdoor Bureau for seven years, since before his marriage.

"No sweat," said Smollet. "They'll fix you up in no time. And after all, these days, nobody starves."

That was a nice slogan. "Thanks for reminding me," said Lembeck. "You're right."

"Now that that's settled," said Smollet, "let's get going on the quota. I'm going to have a hell of a time breaking in a new man and not slowing the stride of Cubicle 97."

The other two men in the cubicle looked up and nodded sympathetically at Lembeck. Then everybody got going on the slogans.

The Pre-Termination Board was fully automated so it wasn't as embarrassing as it might have been. The last time Lembeck had been here, seven years ago, they'd had fachuman androids. Now everything looked like a machine. Except the doorman who, in keeping with an old robotics tradition, was made in the image of a Negro.

Waiting in the Card Surrendering Room Foyer Lembeck let himself loosen up a little. He stretched his legs and made fists of his hands a few times. Edith had taken it all pretty well. The Power Bureau had jumped the gun and cut everything off but Edith had rounded up some candles and they'd had a pretty romantic dinner. The pantry outlet had scrambled at midnight and noth-

ing would come out but garbage so they'd skipped their midnight wafers. Edith was confident that the Employment Complex would do something nice for him this time.

Holding hands in the candlelit dining cubicle they'd even suggested to each other that someone had had Lembeck fired so that he could be switched to a better job. It did seem a possibility.

Edith had not had an Employment Card since four years ago when, the clinical android at her office had decided she was pregnant. Their live doctor had disagreed but by that time the card was cancelled and the waiting list for married women in Edith's age and rank group was closed until such a time as conditions shifted. That was allright. Lembeck had never had a bad deal from the Employment Complex.

Things got disturbing over on Sunset in the Post-Termination Board offices. The big Temporary Food Card machine was making an odd whirring sound. Finally it said, "Lembeck, Lembeck, Arlen, Arlen."

"Yes, sir?" Lembeck said, watching the bright grey machine. It was ten feet high and ten feet wide and, as he watched, the little brass plate with the manufacturer's name popped off and the four little zuber screws pinged on the imitation floor.

"Lembeck, Lembeck, Lembeck, Arlen, Arlen, Arlen." said the Food Card machine.

"Yes, I'm right here. I was told to check with you people before I went over to the Employment Complex. So that I could have a Temporary Food Card until I am put through Pre-Indoctrination by my new place of employment. And then I have to get all my other cards here, too, and see somebody about getting my parking receipt validated."

"Lemlen Arbeck Becklem Lenlem Beckbeck Lenlen Ararar," said the machine.

"Arlen Lembeck," corrected Lembeck.

Two more zuber screws popped out from some unseen place. "Follow the red line and your processing will continue."

A throbbing scarlet line, six inches wide, appeared on the floor and snaked like down hill water for a door in the far wall. Once through it Lembeck found himself outside on Sunset Boulevard.

"It'll be okay," he told himself. He put his timevox to his ear and it told him it was sixteen minutes from his appointment at the Employment Complex. And that was way down on Spring Street in Sector 54. He would have to come back to Post-Termination later. He reminded himself to ask somebody at Employment Complex about it.

It was the first time he'd seen an android cry. This one was in Re-Placement and looked something like an A10 with extra calorie allotments. Lembeck asked, "Nothing?"

"Look," said the android, holding a sheaf of graphs up to Lembeck. It sniffed quietly. "Though less than human, Mr. Lembeck, I pride myself on having mare than a human share of compassion." Its wide unwrinkled head shook from side to side, deflecting the course of the tears. "Your aptitude tests are depressing."

"Couldn't I take new tests. After all those were done seven years ago when I was still a young man in my 20s."

"No, no," said the android, smoothing the graphs out on the desk. "These were made just today."

"When? I've only been here 12 minutes."

"That revolving door you came through is no ordinary revolving door." The android nodded. "Take my word for it, Mr. Lembeck, if there's one thing we know about you with a certainty it's your aptitudes."

"There must be something."

"You see," said the android, "the demand for ceramics is so small at present. Most authorities seem to agree that the Venusian imports are ceramic in nature. The balance of import and local products and the surplus storage factors involved in the output of Greater Los Angeles make chances pretty slim for anyone in the ceramics line."

"But I'm a slogan writer. I was a B14 in Subliminal Outdoor," said Lembeck. "I'm not a ceramicist. My job classification card will show that."

"The cards in your case are still processing over in Sector 28," said the android. "Besides the aptitude figures show that you're a ceramacist. You may feel some inclinations in other directions but we can't honestly put you into a new job where you'll be unhappy and frustrated."

"I was happy for seven years as a slogan writer."

"As you say, though, you entered that line at an early unformed age. Now, wiser and more mature, your real strengths and weaknesses shine through. You can be sure we'll keep you on file. Venusian imports may be only a fad."

"Isn't there some temporary job?"

"You wouldn't be happy in an uncertain situation like that."

"Well," said Lembeck, "there's a problem in that I didn't get any temporary food cards and lodging cards and all the rest of the cards when I was at Post-Termination. Something went wrong and then it was late and I had to rush over here. I even had to pay for my own parking."

"I don't believe," said the android, "that anything can have gone wrong. If you wish to make another appointment to see Post-Termination I can get you the forms to fill out."

"Fine. Could I get another appointment today?"

"You can't even get the forms until next week."

"And the new job?"

"Possibly toward the spring if current trends remain constant."

"What do my wife and I do till then. See, we don't have any food cards at all. She doesn't work at present and I had to surrender all my cards at Pre-Termination. So if . . ."

"Mr. Lembeck," interrupted the android, "let me assure you. Nobody starves. I would suggest, considering the personal nature of your problem, that you consult the Therapy Wing over at Welfare Hub. They're out by the beach over in Sector 24. It's a pleasant drive out there since the rain's let up."

"Thanks," said Lembeck, standing up.

"Would you mind leaving by the side door? If you go back through the revolving door that'll produce another aptitude test. One more like this will depress me even more."

Lembeck used the side door.

Therapy was closed for alterations and the Information Booth in the Welfare Hub's Alternate Lobby suggested that Lembeck try the Motor Club of Southern California.

"The Motor Club?"

"Oops, oops," said the booth. "Sorry, Mr. Lembeck. Correcting. With your problem you had best see the Abraham Lincoln, Etc. Handout Kitchen in Sector 54, down on Central Street. They'll give you a food bundle and a good word until you get on your feet again."

"Thank you."

"No trouble. They have lots of road maps."

All the androids at the Abraham Lincoln, Etc. Handout Kitchen had beards. According to a sign in the Waiting Room today's special was veal wafers.

"Welcome, son," said a whiskered android. "In the name of Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Warren Gamaliel Harding, Barry Goldwater and 17 Latter Day Great Americans let me welcome you." He handed Lembeck a 9 by 12 punch hole sheet of blue paper and a pen, which was chained to his wrist. "Sign that and your package of nourishing food will be handed to you with the sincere best wishes of a group of citizens who, although they are too proud to let themselves sink down to poverty and too energetic not to rise to A rank, nevertheless take pity on those unfortunates who are

lazy and indigent and have a natural sense of rhythm in many cases and just don't want to work for their bread or, as is the case today, veal wafers."

Lembeck read the paper over. "This says I swear under threat of criminal prosecution that I have never cadged a meal from the Abraham Lincoln, Etc. Handout Kitchen before and won't ever come whining back here again."

"It's our way of teaching you to do and dare, risk and rise, stand and deliver," said the android. "Sign by the little x's."

Lembeck hadn't eaten since the night before and it was now nearly dusk. He signed.

Two days later Lembeck had to divorce his wife. He and Edith still loved each other. In fact, the candlelight suppers had brought them closer together. But the Real Estate Council had evicted them from their 2 room apartment on the 26th floor of the Zanuck-Sahara Building and before Edith could move back in with her mother she had to be legally divorced from Lembeck. Living with her mother seemed to be the only way to get immediate food for Edith. The Abraham Lincoln, Etc. Handout Kitchen must have circulated Lembeck's name on their daily ne'er-do-well lists. When he went to a Food Dole Shelter two IBM machines blacked his eye and tossed him out. The Post-Termination Board gave him an appointment a month hence for a pre-interview to reconsider his request for a Temporary Food Card. The only thing that had come off smoothly and quickly was the divorce.

After that Edith was able to sneak food to Lembeck once a day. Her mother, though, was on a Pensioner's Low Calorie Food Allotment and even with an Incompetant Dependent Food Card in the offing for Edith there wasn't much chance of a lot of food coming out of the pantry outlet at Edith's mother's.

From an unemployed TV-novelist, with whom he had been ejected from a Down-But-Not-Out One Night Sleep Hostel, Lembeck learned that the Adopt A Misfit Center might help him.

"You mean I can get a job with them?"

"No," said the ex-TV-novelist, guiding Lembeck into a thin slit of an alley that was policed by an android cop with a defective tube that made him night blind. "Here. We can sleep here tonight."

"I've been sleeping in my car," said Lembeck, settling down on some weeds, "but the Great Los Angeles Credit Authority took it back a couple days ago. Because I missed my regular $38.01 payment. If I'd had my savings account I could have done something. It turns out I forgot to send in my monthly statements saying

that I wasn't planning to withdraw the money. They've been taking out a service charge of $8 and so the savings are gone."

"You're going to be perfect for the Adopt A Misfit Center."

"But not for a job?"

"No. Childless couples go there to adopt whatever they want. Not everyone wants a troublesome little kid. There are those who prefer maturity. When I was on top I adopted six 50 year old men just to bounce my ideas off of. Those days we had the big six room place in the Benedict Canyon sector of Greater LA."

"Somebody would want to adopt a 34 year old ex-slogan writer?"

"Maybe," said the ex-novelist, leaning back against the slick wall of the building. "Me they didn't want. Ex-TV-novelists depress people."

"I'll make an appointment," said Lembeck.

That night he dreamt of wafers.

The day before Lembeck visited the Adopt A Misfit Center an A2 couple from the Palm Springs sector of Greater Los Angeles had come in and adopted a 43 year old ceramicist. That meant there would be a 30 day waiting period before Lembeck's application could be considered. The lobby of the Misfit Center did give him a cup of nearcoffee and two donut wafers and that took care of the food problem for another day. That was Tuesday.

On Wednesday Lembeck got by on the food Edith slipped him. Thursday an A5 dropped a 20 calorie coupon in Lembeck's hand in front of a Martian style foodamat and Lembeck went in and had 20 calories worth of something thick and light blue. He now weighed 15 pounds less than his usual 150 and his beard had filled out. The rest of the week he tried making the rounds of Termination Boards and welfare outlets again in hope of getting an earlier appointment. All he got was a small red punch card listing him as a Chronic Malcontent. He had to carry the card with him at all times or pay a fine.

On Sunday Lembeck found the All-Purpose Automatic Religious Center. It had never occured to him to turn to the church for help but as he was walking by the bright silver building in the derelict sector of Greater Los Angeles a strong aroma of hot soup drifted out over the gold turnstiles and Lembeck was compelled to go inside.

There were, surprisingly considering the strong food scents inside, only two other people in the great vaulted room. An old C rating derelict in frayed grey sports clothes and an attractive blonde girl of about 20. The girl had on a clean pair of faded denhim pants and a pale tartan shirt. The sniffling C rating derelict was sitting in front of the Buddhist display and the girl

knelt before an automatic religious android whose denomination Lembeck couldn't place.

The smell of soup, and possibly a meat course, was strong in the big shadow-ceilinged room. Lembeck couldn't locate its source. He picked a friendly looking scarlet robed android and pushed the On button.

"What is life without a purpose, without a goal," said the android in a warm rich voice.

"Could you tell me where the dining room is?"

"What is life without a goal? I will tell you, my son. A hollow shell."

"I didn't eat yesterday. I thought, noticing the aroma, that I might be able to arrange for a meal here."

"Those of us who have fallen from the main currents of Greater Los Angeles Society need goals, too. And though it is truly said that nobody starves in this day and age, nevertheless a certain hunger can grow up."

"That's right," agreed Lembeck.

"A two year hitch with the Martian Reclamation And Roadway Corps provides you with a goal, a purpose and three minimum calorie requirement meals each and every day," said the android. "When I have finished my sermon an application blank will issue from the slot marked goal. Sign it and put it back in the slot. This time tomorrow you will be enroute to the red planet on a fine ship where meals of great warmth and nourishment are served at regular hours. Sign, my son."

"I don't want to go to Mars. I have an ex-wife down by the ocean. I just want something to eat until I get a job."

"Life is nice when you have a purpose," said the android and clicked off.

An application form dropped out into Lembeck's hand.

"Don't," said a voice at his side.

It was the blonde girl. "Mam?"

"The other guy's too far gone for us but you might do. Want to join?"

"Join what?"

"Tell you outside," she said. Come on."

"I don't want to go to Mars."

"Neither do we."

"Couldn't I see somebody about a bowl of soup?"

"There's no food here."

"The smell."

"It's a chemical substance they feed into blowers," she said, nodding her head at the ceiling.

Lembeck went outside with the girl.

Sawtelle was a tall grizzle-whiskered man, thin in his khaki coat and pants. He handed Lembeck a half a vegetable wafer and a real piece of nearcheese. The food caught a pleasant glow from the camp fire. "I have a hundred in my group so far," Sawtelle said.

"Dotted all over the Sierra Madres here." He pointed at the 100 million lights of Greater Los Angeles fanning away far below. "Misfits and unemployables. We don't eat well. But we do, with our raids and our experimental gardens, manage to eat without taking charity."

The blonde girl, her name was Margery McCracklin, was one of Sawtelle's recruiters. She was sitting quietly across the cave.

Lembeck, watching her as he ate, noticed that her wrists were narrow and sharp, her ankles, too. It had taken them a long time to climb up here into the mountains to Sawtelle's temporary encampment. "You steal food and supplies?" Lembeck asked. He broke the piece of cheese into four sections, making each one last four bites.

"Yes," said Sawtelle. "Only from the A class and the top half of the Bs. Those who have well above the minimum."

"I have an ex-wife," said Lembeck. "If I joined you would I be able to see her?"

"I have an ex-wife, too," said Sawtelle. "Margery has an ex-child. We all try to pay visits and give over what food we can."

Lembeck ran his tongue over his teeth. "I hate to hurt my job chances."

Margery laughed. "You'll probably never get called back in. Once you get edged out of the system you seldom get back."

"It has nothing to do with you," said Sawtelle. "With an almost 100% automatic employment and welfare system in Greater Los Angeles little kinks are bound to show up now and then."

"I'll never work again?"

"That's what," said Margery, hunching toward the small fire, "has happened to most of us. If you get another chance with them they need never know about this part of your life."

"They usually only check for an actual conviction record," said Sawtelle. "You could be given a criminal inclinations aptitude test. You could get caught." He cut himself a hunk of nearcheese from the piece in his jacket pocket.

"Allright," said Lembeck. "What the hell. Okay."

Margery smiled at him.

An A class housewife in a four room ranch style house in the Pasadena sector of Greater Los Angeles shot Margery dead on the third food raid Lembeck went on.

Lembeck kept running, a package of turkey wafers under his coat. There was no doubt that Margery was gone. The blaster pistol had lit up the night long enough for him to see her die over his shoulder.

At dawn he was well into the mountains. But where Sawtelle was he had no idea. Margery had been his partner on all his missions and, since Lembeck was still

breaking in, Margery had been entrusted with the pattern of campsite shifts.

Day came on and Lembeck opened the package of wafers and ate two, chewing and swallowing fast as he climbed. His stomach made unsettled sounds and he stopped finally and ate a whole handful of the turkey wafers.

The brush was thick and there were clusters of trees up here. Lembeck had trouble breathing and he knew that he must have climbed higher than he had realized. He made it over a rise and found a narrow path leading down into a slight cuplike clearing. This would be a good place to rest.

He sat on a mossy rock and ate another handful of wafers and then the box was empty. Lembeck dropped it between his feet. That was wrong. He decided to hide the empty box.

Off to his right a thick growth of thorny bushes tangled together over a crevice. He went over to stuff the empty wafer carton in there. His hand and arm got scratched as he slid the box in through the thorns. He cocked his wrist to fling the box away. But the box hit against something solid. Lembeck shoved both hands in and forced the bushes aside. He saw now a door handle.

"Well, let's see now," he said. He twisted one arm up to guard his face and head and then pushed around the bushes. He caught the handle and turned it. A door opened in and he fell forward and onto a slanting corridor. His hand still on the handle he looked at the door. A small plate on it read: "Nuclear Emergency Food Storehouse No. Twenty. Stocked by the Pasadena Chamber of Commerce, May, 1991."

Lembeck left the door open and moved down the corridor. When he hit the end of the incline lights went on in the room beyond. "It's stayed in working order all these years," he said.

The room was bigger than the apartment he and Edith had had and it seemed to be surrounded by other rooms. On shelves on two walls there were packages of preserved foods and in the room's center there was someting labeled Safe Water Well. Another room had smoked meats, the real stuff, and bottles of wine and brandy and whiskey. There were packages and containers of foods Lembeck had only heard of. Besides all that there were shelves of old-fashioned food wafers. And all of the food was still edible. The labels testified that it had been preserved in ways that would make it last until an emergency made its use necessary. There had been no emergency since 1991, not the kind the Pasadena Chamber of Commerce had been thinking about.

In all there were five big rooms, each filled with food and assorted drink, including two still function-

ing wells. Lembeck laughed as he made glancing inventories of the storehouse. He knew exactly what he would do now. That religious android had been right. When you had a purpose life was okay.

Lembeck took a look around the main room and then ran up the ramp corridor to the outer door.

He slammed the door shut and ran back inside.

He started to eat.



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Now that space flight is a reality (and does the SF writer, editor, publisher, or reader get any credit for it? Precious damned little) one might expect an increase in the number of SF stories based upon it. If one did, one would be surprised and disappointed. Instead of receiving more such stories we are receiving fewer. This one by Dean McLaughlin is, then, all the more welcome: not only a space story, but a good one. Once upon a time there was a man who set off with a message to a General Garcia, a task beset with great difficulties, as Garcia (a rebel against the Spanish crown) was hiding at an unknown point in the semi-impenetrable thickets of the Cuban outback. When Lt. Rowas got there at last, he found Garcia had not only already received the message, but hadn't cared much for it in the first place. As an exersise in communication it was a failure; but as an exercise in courage and perseverance it was a splendid success, and as such it has passed into legend. Listen now while Dean McLaughlin (THE VOYAGE WHICH IS ENDED, Aug. 1962), an amateur of astronomy, and the son of a well-known astronomer, tells us of a great and future journey homeward-bound.

ONE HUNDRED DAYS FROM HOME

by Dean McLaughlin

OUT THERE, WHERE NOTHING purposeful had ever gone—where only the stars and the blinding sun interrupted the blackness and night—the *Challenger* moved.

It did not seem to move. Its rigid flanks were lifeless, and its mighty rocket-spouts were cold. All its reference points were so distant that only precise observation gave sign of its headlong flight.

Inside the ship, too, there seemed to be no change. Each day was like the day before, and the day before that. There was not even the subdued excitement which had prevailed on the out-

ward journey. Now they had been to Mars. Now they were going home.

Boredom couldn't be prevented. Whit Fredericks knew that, and he didn't like it. But it could not be stopped. Confined too long in this can of air—the only livable place within millions of miles—and weightless, and with little to do, it could not be escaped that the men would be numbed by monotony.

But this day was different, though in most respects it was the same. The difference was the countdown number on the clock-face—a perfect, prosaic 100.

One hundred days from home. It marked an end to a stage of their journey—the beginning of the last phase. And, though not one of the *Challenger*'s seven men regretted their long, lonely voyage, neither was there one who didn't look forward to returning home.

For to them had fallen one of the great adventures of all time. There had been moments of supreme excitement, and tension, danger, and risk. Moments of the knowledge that something great was being accomplished. And moments, too, when thin-worn nerves turned to rage and unspeakable hate.

Now it was nearly over. They could look forward to its end. They could feel inside themselves growing the sense of success—of having done a thing no men had ever done before. Impatiently, now, they could wait for the relief of knowing it was finally done.

This day, Fredericks took the sun and star sights, and the target bearing. Everything was correct and exact; nothing had happened to deviate his ship from its orbit. He put the figures in the computer, and the computer reported almost instantly that the *Challenger* would intersect Earth's orbit 100 days hence, that Earth would be within maneuvering distance from the intersection point at that time, and that the fuel remaining in the ship's tanks would be enough to put it down on the moon.

Whit Fredericks smiled. He admired the computer's flawless precision, but its almost pedantic correctness amused him. He made the log entry and put the book back in its slot.

"We take a wrong turn in the night?" Grant Halleck asked as Fredericks came out of the guidanceman's cubby. He was strapped in at the life-cell monitor board. The lights were all green.

Fredericks returned the faint smile. "We still alive?" he replied.

"Just a minute, while I check the board," Halleck said, deadpan. He was a spidery-limbed, small man with the face of a boy. His eyes swept over the panels, quickly competent. "Yep—still here," he decided finally. "But where are we?"

"A hundred days from home," Fredericks said. He liked the sound of it. He said it again. "A hundred days from home."

And then he had no time to think about it further. Another voice intruded, urgently demanding attention.

"Cap!"

Fredericks let his boots grab on a bulkhead and turned. Arch Sigler, in the watchscreen cubby, was adjusting his dials. His shoulders had an unnatural tenseness in them. "Some big junk out there," he said anxiously. "It's going to come close!"

"Alarm!" Fredericks commanded. Sigler reached up and grabbed the red handle. A clanging gong rang through the ship.

Fredericks planted himself in the guidanceman's chair and strapped in. Quickly, he made adjustments. "Feed me a track," he ordered.

The off-watch men came scrambling out of the bunkroom—most of them in only their skivvies. They grabbed their vacuum suits off the rack and struggled into them.

"Track set up," Sigler reported. "Take it."

The tracking equipment was connected directly to the computer. Fredericks set up the standard encounter-analysis program and let the thing think. Almost instantly, the meters blurred, then froze. Fredericks read them at a glance.

Time before closest approach: six minutes and forty.

Distance at closest approach: zero.

Fredericks felt cold. "Collision," he said tautly. "Six minutes, forty."

Even as he said it, the ticker flicked off the seconds. Six minutes thirty five. Six minutes thirty.

The men had their vacuum suts on now, all but the helmets. They strapped in at their emergency posts. Mike Lockridge, the regular guidanceman, took the manual pilot's chair.

"Rig for drive," Fredericks ordered. Quickly, he gave the computer the setup for a minimum expenditure maneuver, and it gave him an orbit revision that called for a ten second blast of two G from the tailpipes. Fredericks rechecked it—it would mean an extra half-day on their flight plan, but the junkpiece was coming up fast. He unlocked the execute button and punched it.

The steering rockets shot off at five minutes and twenty. The ship lurched gently and Fredericks imagined the starfields wheeling around him. The rockets shot off again at four and fifty eight. Fredericks checked the inertial navigator, then double-checked with a star-sight through the periscope. The ship was on target.

"Pumps hot," Nick Greenglass announced from the engineer's board.

"Helmets," Fredericks ordered. He rechecked the ticker. "Two G's at four and thirty," he warned.

He reached up and took his own helmet from the rack. He got it socketed and twisted, and hastily tested the seal and the air circulation. It was tight and good.

"Tight," he said to the intercom.

"Tight," the other men said, each in turn, just the way they had drilled.

The ticker said four minutes thirty. Mike Lockridge was grabbing for the manual controls when the ship trembled briefly. Then, abruptly, everything had weight. A terrible, smashing weight that pressed them cruelly into their air-cushioned chairs.

Two G's was no joke. All the men had endured much greater blasts, but it was still twice the force human flesh had been born to endure. And, except for brief moments, they had been in no-weight at all for five months.

Through the intercom, Fredericks heard them groan. Resisting all instincts, he did not let his body try to fight the crushing force. Tensed muscles would cramp.

It seemed to go on and on—far longer than ten seconds. Then it stopped, and for a long moment all the sound Fredericks heard was the men breathing deeply.

But it wasn't yet time for relief. "Watchscreen!" he demanded. "On track?"

There was a hesitation. Then, "Yes, sir. On track."

Fredericks set the computer to re-analyze the encounter. The monitor-board meters reset themselves, and Fredericks relaxed. It would be a clean miss.

"Keep your eye on it," Fredericks advised. "But we're safe."

Then he added a grim afterthought. "Unless it has cousins," he said.

A big piece of junk like that one—especially one coming up from sunwards—very often had orbit-companions. And out here, the small bits of junk were as deadly as big ones—more deadly, for the big ones could be seen soon enough to evade.

Fredericks stayed at his post. They all did. It was all they could do now. The seconds ticked off.

Sigler's shout, when it came, was utterly dreadful with terror, and his words were not one of the phrases they had used in their drills. They had never imagined it would be necessary.

"It's coming after us!" he yelled.

Fredericks' first reaction was disbelief. "What?" he wondered dumbly. Then, "On track?"

"Uh?" Sigler uttered. "Oh! Yes, sir. On track."

Fredericks gave it to the computer again. Again the dials jittered, then froze. Fredericks read them.

Collision, one minute and thirty five, they said.

"Collision!" Fredericks barked. There wasn't time to set up an orbit correction. The aim for the previous shot would have to be good enough. He rattled off orders.

"Pilot! Manual! Four G on twenty!"

"Four G. Twenty," Lockridge acknowledged.

The whole mass of the *Challenger* slammed into Fredericks' back. He almost blacked out. It was like being crushed beneath a solid block of steel.

The drive went on for a long time. When it stopped, Fredericks didn't move for a moment. He lay there, limp and sweating. Blood throbbed in his face and limbs.

But he had to move. "On track?" he croaked.

"Tracking," Sigler said. He sounded scared.

Fredericks set the computer for continuous recalculation. Again it reported there would be no collision. Then, slowly at first, but then faster—the reading for distance at closest approach shrank toward zero.

Fredericks pulled the periscope down over his helmet. He twisted the wheels until he found the thing. He stared at it, not breathing, amazed.

He let out his breath in a long sigh. He relaxed. "It's all right, boys," he said, and the relief was plain in his haggard voice. "It's a ship."

And it *was* a ship—but such a ship as he had never seen. Eight rigid struts sprawled like legs from the small, stubby capsule—sprawled out to support the cylindrical frame on which was woved a webwork of silvery, sun-glinting cables. In the harsh and unmerciful light of the sun, it looked like a spider enmeshed in its web.

"What's a ship doing way out here?" Mike Lockridge wondered.

Fredericks said nothing. He had no answer. No answer was possible. He wondered the same thing.

"Is it *ours*?" Sigler wondered nervously.

Fredericks had no answer for him, either.

He watched it, dumb-struck by its strangeness. He wondered if men were its builders, and where it had come from. With a remote, disbelieving kind of fear, he wondered if there were men inside.

But then a signal flare burst brightly beside it, like a new star. Blazing fiercely, the light was colorless. Then it was yellow, then briefly green, and finally blue.

Fredericks hadn't seen a signal flare in years, but he didn't need his signal book to read it. It was a request for permission to come aboard.

"Shoot a green flare," he ordered. "It looks like friends."

Through the periscope, Fredericks watched the strange ship as it came abreast. It moved with the

ease of a fish in water, and with no more display of the forces it used. It moved as no rocket-driven craft could possibly move, with accelerations such as no living man could endure.

Then it was alongside, not fifty feet away. It was bigger than he'd first thought—so big that his own ship could easily fit in the open space enclosed by its cylindrical, cable-webbed frame.

Warily, he watched it. For a long time—at least it seemed a long time—the strange ship was motionless and changeless. But then, at last, something emerged from the capsule. It was hard to make out in the sharp light and clean-edged shadows, but after a moment, as the figure squeezed through the webwork of cables and launched itself toward the *Challenger,* Fredericks managed to make it out clearly. Beyond all doubt, it was a man.

With a feeling of great relief, he released the periscope. He unstrapped and got out of the chair. "We've got a visitor coming," he announced. He gestured to the chair he had vacated. "If anybody wants a look at the ship," he said, "go ahead. It's worth looking at."

He unplugged the intercom jack from his suit and crossed to the coffin-sized airlock. He started it cycling and watched through the peephole as the scavenger pump sucked the last gram of air from the chamber. The quivering fan-ribbons stilled. The outside door swung inward.

The strange ship wasn't in his line of sight. Through the dim glow of light in the chamber, he looked out at the unwinking stars.

It was a long wait. Once he glanced back over his shoulder—the men were taking turns at the periscope for a sight at the spider-like ship. Ned Kornhausen had taken Grant Halleck's place at the life-cell monitor board, so Halleck could take a look, too.

When almost five minutes had passed with no sign of the stranger, Fredericks decided to go out and see if the man needed help. Now that he thought about it, he hadn't seen the man rig a safety line, and the carelessness of that neglect apalled him. He reached for the control to put air in the chamber again, but before he could touch it, the man grab-swam into the airlock.

He was clumsy. That was Fredericks' first impression—as if he had never been properly trained for no-weight conditions. He watched the man fumble around and finally locate the in-lock controls.

Casually, the stranger jabbed one of the buttons. It was the wrong button—the emergency both-doors-open control—and Fredericks hit the cancel knob instantly. Then he broke out in a trembling sweat. In another moment, the inner door would have

popped from its frame, and the air-blast would have hurled him out into space. Inwardly furious, he reset the controls for the pressure-in cycle.

Half a minute later, the stranger emerged into the ship. Fredericks grabbed his arm and got his boots set on the deck, only to discover they didn't stick. He frowned.

The stranger's suit looked deficient in other ways, too. It didn't look sturdy. The limb casings were bulkless and the torso looked too slim. Fredericks wondered how long it would stand up to hard use. Not long, he decided.

The man was talking—at least, his mouth moved as if he was talking. Fredericks couldn't hear a thing. He gestured to his helmet and then to the other man's helmet, and shook his head.

The stranger gawked at him blankly.

Fredericks swung aside to check the aneroid barometer. Cabin pressure was on green, it assured him. He vented his suit and took off his helmet. After a moment, the stranger caught on and took his off, too.

He was a young man—twenty two, Fredericks guessed. Not more than twenty five. His face was moderately handsome. His dark hair was clipped very short in the vacuum-suiter's standard fuzz-scalp. It was just about the only sensible thing Fredericks saw.

"Surprised to see me?" he asked cheerfully.

"Moderately," Fredericks conceded stiffly. "I suppose you realize you forced us to burn more than seventeen tons of fuel to avoid a collision. And that you almost killed me and yourself with your carelessness in the airlock."

The young man's jaw dropped incredulously. "I *what*?" he demanded. "Mister, you're vacuum happy. Look—don't blame me just because you're flying around in a bathtub that's as obsolete as the ark."

The crewmen drifted over—all but Sigler and Kornhausen, who stayed at the watchscreen and life-cell positions. Hovering close behind Fredericks, they silently studied the first new face they'd seen in more than two years.

"Who are you?" Fredericks asked, his voice hard.

"Bill Niven," the stranger replied. "Master pilot, Research and Development section. What's the matter? Don't you like somebody to fly circles around you?"

So he was one of the wait-till-you-don't-need-it boys. That explained a lot of things—including his carelessness. Fredericks pushed a finger at his chest.

"I don't like anyone to endanger my ship, my crew, or myself," he said. He glanced around. Sigler and Kornhausen were intent on the monitor boards. All the others were watching him and Niven.

They had taken off their helmets.

"Meadows," he ordered. "Take guidance. The rest of you . . ." He gestured upward to the bunkroom hatchway.

They went, grab-swimming through the hole like minnows, with no wasted effort. Meadows strapped into the guidanceman's chair.

Fredericks gestured to Niven. "Come along," he instructed. Ankle-turning his boots off the deckplate, he hauled himself up toward the hatchway.

Niven tried to follow. As before, he was clumsy. He didn't know how to keep his feet where they belonged, or how to guide his drift in the right direction. Fredericks stopped at the hatchway, grabbed the man by his shoulder, and steered him through. He almost got a boot in his face for his trouble.

Before going on through himself, Fredericks turned back to Meadows. "Keep an eye on that ship," he suggested. "If it starts coming closer . . ." He didn't have to finish.

In the bunkroom, Niven was stripping out of his suit. It was a one-layer rig, which increased Fredericks' doubts of its reliability. Under it, Niven wore the usual, snug-fitting long johns.

Fredericks gestured him to one of the couches. "Strap down," he suggested. "It's better than having to hang on to something, and I don't want you floating around."

Niven did as he was told. Fredericks peeled off his gauntlets and clipped them to the tool-clasps around his waist. Niven's suit didn't have tool-clasps, he noticed —just a belt of knobby buttons which, he realized after a moment, were solid-rocket charges. Three of them were burned out.

Massaging his cramped, sweaty hands, he floated over Niven. "Now," he said. "I suppose you were looking for us."

"Well, sure," Niven said, as if he wondered why such an obvious question had to be asked. "It's not like this was any old street corner, you know." Then he added, "I had a time finding you, too."

"We're on the plotted orbit," Fredericks pointed out. "We were, at least, before you came along."

The young man made a careless, dismissing gesture. "Look," he said. "The kind of ship I'm flying, you don't play mathematical billiards with. You just sit down and drive. I had to zigzag all over the place before I picked you up." He paused. "You take a look at my ship?"

Obviously, he was as pleased with his ship as he was with himself. Fredericks didn't feel like gratifying his ego. "Yes," he said.

Niven was disappointed, but he didn't give up. "Well, what do you think of it?"

"It's an experimental type, I

suppose," Fredericks said, not impressed. "Or you wouldn't be flying it."

It was inevitable, after all, there would have been some new developments in the two years he'd been away. Niven's ship was obviously one of them. That was all he cared about knowing.

But Niven was very impressed with it. *"Experimental!"* he echoed scornfully. "Mister—it's going to put you out of business. You know how long ago I left Mare Imbrium? Ten hours—that's all. Just ten hours!"

Now Fredericks *was* impressed. For him, Earth was a hundred days away. But for this man, strapped in the couch in front of him, it was less than a clock's full circle. It was hard to believe.

"But the power," he objected. "The acceleration."

Niven laughed. "What about 'em?" he wondered cockily. "It's got a Blaustein reactor . . . oh, I forgot—they didn't invent it till after you left. Entirely new principle. One look at its guts and you'd run screaming. But it's hot and it's small—more juice than I know what to do with. And as for acceleration—I could run it a thousand G's, and I still wouldn't feel it."

Fredericks said nothing. Either Niven was telling tall tales, or a lot had been done while he was away. He couldn't decide which. It was hard to imagine that space flight technology could have changed so much in only two years.

"It works with gravity," Niven babbled on happily. "Gravitational fields. All of 'em—Earth's, the moon's, the sun's—name 'em, it can use 'em. You climb on 'em like they was ladders."

Fredericks shook his head, sure he'd missed something. *"How?"* he asked.

"It moves you from one potential-level to another," Niven paraphrased, but that didn't make it any clearer. "The stronger the gravity field, the less power it takes, except for the mass-weight factor. And you steer by putting a differential push on the various interpenetrating fields. *That* takes practice, believe me!"

Fredericks frowned, deeply puzzled. "But acceleration . . ." he persisted. He didn't *want* to believe Niven had got out here so fast.

"You don't feel it," Niven explained. "Everything inside the flux-field moves by itself—I mean, all together." He grinned up at Fredericks. "It *is* sort of confusing, isn't it."

Fredericks nodded. "Yes," he said. "It is. But that's enough. Don't bother explaining any more. I think I have the general idea."

That wasn't really true. He didn't have even the beginning of an understanding of how Niven's ship worked. But he did know what it could do.

It made every tailpipe ship obsolete.

The next trip to Mars could be done in a week.

He didn't like it. It meant the end of space flight as he knew it. Space flight was for men, he believed—for patient men, trained men. Men who could bear the loneliness and solitude of years-long journeys. Men who could meet high danger with calm minds, and who would know what to do.

His kind of men.

Niven's ship would change all that. It would be too easy, now. Anyone could do it.

Anyone could go to space.

Fredericks thought of the Mars he had seen—strange and inhuman, starkly beautiful. He thought of it transformed into a Mecca for two-week vacationing tourists.

He didn't like it, all those footprints in the ancient sands, and the bottles of that sand being sold for cheap souveniers.

He made himself stop thinking about it. It was useless and futile to think. It would happen, and a lot of people would think it was good. And he couldn't stop it. And besides . . .

To think that way was against another thing he believed in—that Mars, Venus . . . all the planets! . . . were for men to settle on, live on, and make their homes.

With the new ships—Niven's kind of ship—they could do it. They could go there . . . build homes . . . only . . .

It would be too easy. It was terribly unfair that the journey which had been so long for him—which had been his whole life for two years of exile and risk—it was unfair that for everyone after him it should be so effortless.

But he shrugged. He accepted it. He had to.

"You were looking for us," he reminded Niven. His voice was hard, resentful. "Why? To show off your ship?"

"Why not?" Niven wanted to know. "We knew where you'd be. Can you think of a better way to prove what it can do? Besides, we figured you guys'd be anxious to get home. Well, you're coming back with me."

Fredericks didn't speak at once. He didn't know what he'd expected, but it wasn't this. His impulse was to reject it at once, as if it was something indecent.

But he didn't. He glanced back at the men: they floated motionlessly at the other side of the compartment, their arms folded, silently watching. Though he had known them closely for a long time, he couldn't read what they were thinking. They were suddenly like strangers.

He turned back to Niven. "Sorry," he said. "We've got to stay with the ship."

Niven fumbled in a pouch at his belt. "That's all right," he said easily. "I'm supposed to bring that in, too. The whole thing."

His hand came out of the pouch with a flat metal case. It flipped open. He selected a cigarette, touched it to the red-glowing coil, then offered the case to Fredericks.

Fredericks snatched the cigarette out of his hand and snuffed it between thumb and finger. It was the quickest way.

"Hey! What's the idea?" Niven protested.

Fredericks took the cigarette case and put the mangled cigarette back in place. He snapped the case shut and handed it back without a word.

"What's the matter? What did I *do?*" Niven expostulated.

"You're breathing our air," Fredericks told him. "Our oxygen equipment wasn't built to take the extra load. Don't burn any more than you have to."

"One little cigarette?" Niven wondered. "One lousy little smoke?"

Fredericks looked down at his hand. His thumb and finger hurt sharply where he'd burned them. "We've stayed alive this long," he told Niven, "because we were careful about little things like that. We've known what we're doing, every minute. That's why we're travellers, and you're just a test man."

Nick Greenglass came up behind him and passed him a tube of burn salve. "Thanks, Nick," he said.

It was almost empty, and it was all he could do to squeeze out a dab. But he recapped the tube and gave it back. It might be needed again, yet, before the voyage was done. He smeared the ointment on his thumb and finger. After a moment, they stopped hurting.

He returned his attention to Niven again. "Do you carry orders for us?"

"Orders?" Niven repeated blankly. "Who needs orders? They just told me to give you a lift, that's all."

"Then the idea didn't come from Operations," Fredericks inferred.

"You think Operations is the only outfit that can have an idea?" Niven wondered. "They don't even know I'm out here. They'll be in for a big surprise when I bring you in a whole hundred days ahead of the plan."

"*If* you bring us back," Fredericks corrected him.

"What d'you mean, *if?*" Niven wanted to know.

"I'm not sure we'll take that ride," Fredericks said. "I'm not sure we want to."

"Why not?" Niven protested.

Fredericks didn't give him an answer. "I'll talk it over with my crew," he said.

Niven was puzzled. "Don't you

run things around here?" he wondered.

"I'm in command," Fredericks admitted. "But that doesn't mean I don't take their advice."

"But what's there to decide?" Niven protested.

Fredericks ignored him. He turned to his crewmen and gestured them to the hatchway, down into the control room again. When they had gone, he moved to the opening himself. "Wait here," he told Niven, and went down head first.

He dogged the hatch shut behind him and let himself drift gently to the deck.

"Well, you heard it," he said. He glanced toward the men on watch. "Sigler? Kornhausen? Did you hear all right?"

"Most of it," Kornhausen said without looking away from his monitor board. "We heard fine."

"Meadows? What about you?" Fredericks asked.

"I heard enough," Meadows answered. His head was under the periscope's hood. His voice was muffled. "I think his ship's drifting off a bit. Wouldn't it be a laugh if it got so far off he couldn't find it, and he had to ride home with us?"

"The laugh would be on us," Fredericks said grimly. "He'd breathe up our air."

"Oh," Meadows said. "Yeah. That's right."

Fredericks didn't give him time to think about it. "What's the guidance situation?" he asked.

Meadows consulted his board. "We'll have to correct," he said. "With minimum fuel use, we're a hundred-three days out. We've got just fuel enough to do it—no margin."

Fredericks took the report stonily. "Well, that's what margin is for," he said bleakly. "Now it's used. Now we'll have to do everything perfect."

He swung around, met briefly the eyes of each of his men—all but the three on duty. "I think you ought to have a say in this," he said. "All of you. Shall we take a chance on it? Or should we let him take us home?"

None of them answered at once. They looked as if they didn't want to talk. He singled out Nick Greenglass. "What about it, Nick?"

Greenglass evaded his eyes. "What do *you* think?" he stalled.

"I think there's something to be said on both sides," Fredericks said. "I want your opinions before I decide. In fact . . ."

He paused. "We'll make it private," he decided. "Helmets. All of you."

They got their helmets off the rack and started to put them on. "Stay out of the intercom," Fredericks told them. "I'll say when to plug in."

When they all had them on tight and tested, Fredericks

plugged the intercom into his breastplate. He pointed at Greenglass, and Greenglass took one of the plugs from the switchboard and punched it into his socket.

It was almost like being alone. Their tri-layer helmets cut them off from all external sounds. They had a private wire.

"All right, Nick," Fredericks said. "Say what you think."

Greenglass was uncomfortable and not very articulate. "I . . . honest, I didn't think about it," he protested. "I figured it was up to you. Anything you want is all right by me."

"You've had time to think about it now," Fredericks pointed out. "Nick . . . I want to do what you want. It's a very simple thing to decide: do you want to get home tomorrow? Or three months from now?"

"But it . . . it *isn't* that simple," Greenglass objected. "I mean, there's a lot more to it than that. Uh . . . you *don't* want to do it, do you?"

"Never mind what I want," Fredericks told him.

Greenglass gestured helplessly. "Well, sure I'd like to get home," he said. "I mean, we've been gone a long time, and . . . well, you know what I mean. I'd like to have it behind us—have the whole job finished. We'd all like to see it. But . . . well, I'm not in all that much hurry about it. I mean, don't take him up on it just because we'd like to get home as soon as we can."

Fredericks smiled. "All right, Nick," he said. "Take your plug out."

"Aren't you going to say what *you* think?" Greenglass wondered.

Fredericks shook his head. "I haven't decided," he said. "Pull your plug."

Bewilderedly, Greenglass pulled his plug.

Fredericks pointed to Mike Lockridge. Lockridge took the signal and plugged into the intercom.

"I'm next?" he asked.

Fredericks nodded. "What's your opinion?"

Lockridge was more articulate. "Shucks," he said. "We're doing all right. Why spoil it?"

"Spoil it?" Fredericks echoed uncertainly.

"We can make it OK. We don't need his help," Lockridge explained.

"That's what I thought you meant," Fredericks said. "But I had to be sure. You can pull your plug, now."

Lockridge looked at him oddly a moment, then pulled it.

That made two of them. Three, counting himself. Fredericks was greatly relieved. He'd been afraid the others would want to go with Niven—that his own reluctance was a matter of pride relating to the fact that the *Challenger* was under his command, and that—

no matter what the specific circumstances—it would be humiliating to have his ship brought home like a derelict.

Especially if the ship that brought him home was incontestably a better ship.

But, as it had turned out, he needn't have worried. It was, after all, their ship, too.

He went on with the questioning, letting each man express his opinion in the helmet-insulated privacy of the intercom. None of them disagreed.

"We can't quit now," Ned Kornhausen argued. "People'd think we gave up. They'd say we lost our nerve, and we didn't think we could do it. Well, we *can* do it, and we don't want 'em thinking anything else. At least, I don't."

"I wouldn't even know what to do if I got home tomorrow," Halleck explained half-humorously. "He might at least 've brought us a copy of The New York Times."

Arch Sigler was even more definite. "Hitch a ride with that Sunday driver? Not me. The way he flies that thing gives me the shakes. He isn't careful enough. Besides, why should we let them show off how good their ship is? It'll make us look silly."

Stan Meadows was thinking the same way. "Look," he said, when his turn came. "We're the ones who've been doing something. I mean, really *doing* it. Now they're trying to make it look like nothing. I guess maybe in a couple of years it *will* be nothing. But . . . well, I think we ought to finish it. By ourselves—the way we started out."

"I think that's what we'll do," Fredericks said.

Through the periscope, Fredericks watched Niven's ship head back toward Earth—watched it with a feeling of hollow triumph. He had not gained anything by rejecting Niven's offer. He had only kept what was his.

A way of life . . . but a way that was ending.

Niven had been stunned. He had never imagined Fredericks might refuse. "You must be nutty," he complained. "Don't you want to get home?"

"Yes. We want to get home," Fredericks told him. "But . . ."

He paused. There was no way to make his decision logical and sensible, because it was *not* logical or sensible. Nevertheless, it was his decision, and he would stand by it.

"This is the last time anyone's going to make a trip like we did," he said. "It's not the best way to make a trip, and there's a lot you can say against it. But it's our way, and we're going to finish it our way—in our own ship, with our own power—just the way we started out, with no help from anyone."

Niven gave him a queer look.

"I don't figure you," he complained. "I just don't figure you."

Fredericks didn't really care. "I guess," he said, making plain by his tone that this was his final word. "I guess it's just that we're not in a hurry."

"It's your funeral," Niven reminded him.

He watched Niven's ship leave, and the men hovered around the watchscreen cubby and saw over Arch Sigler's shoulders. Accelerating from a standstill at a furious rate, Niven flew his ship around the *Challenger*. He did it twice, very fast and close, missing the *Challenger's* nose by only a few scant inches. Then he streaked off sunwards, toward Earth, and disappeared among the stars.

"Is that air-breathing idiot crazy?" Sigler asked, outraged. "Did you see how close he came? He almost clipped us!"

"I saw," Fredericks said. "He doesn't understand us. He was showing off."

"Huh!" Sigler snorted. "He comes and yanks the rug out from under us and walks on our teeth, and then he can't understand why we don't like him!"

"We're out of date," Fredericks said. He said it plainly—letting the words speak his bitterness. "Two years behind time. Obsolete. It won't be the same again, ever. We'll have to get used to a lot of new things, when we get home."

They thought about it, all of them, with a dark, angry glow. "When we get home," Fredericks said again, dead-voiced. The prospect gave him no pleasure. "But we'll show 'em," he said. He said it stubbornly. "We'll show 'em!"

For a moment, then, he didn't move. Then, slowly at first, but with gathering speed, he started to work the computer, setting up the orbit correction which would put them again on the path toward Earth . . . toward home.

For the ship still moved, alive in spite of its inert, blind flight. Unceasingly, it hurtled on and on through the night which, in spite of the sunlight and starshine—and in spite of the ventures of men—will never end.





THE SLOWLY MOVING FINGER

by Isaac Asimov

ALAS, THE EVIDENCES OF MORTALITY are all about us; the other day our little parakeet died. As nearly as we could make out, it was a trifle over five years old, and we had always taken the best of care of it. We had fed it, watered it, kept its cage clean, allowed it to leave the cage and fly about the house, taught it a small but disreputable vocabulary, permitted it to ride about on our shoulders and eat at will from dishes at the table. In short, we encouraged it to think of itself as one of us humans.

But alas, its aging process remained that of a parakeet. During its last year, it slowly grew morose and sullen; mentioned its improper words but rarely; took to walking rather than flying. And finally it died.

Then, as if that weren't enough, this article will appear at just about the week of my birthday; and I always grow petulant at about that time of the year. Each year, I break my own previous record and enter new high ground as far as age is concerned and it is remarkably cold comfort to think that everyone else is doing exactly the same thing.

The fact of the matter is that I resent growing old. In my time I was a kind of mild infant prodigy—you know, the kind that teaches himself to read before he is five and enters college at fifteen and is writing for publication at eighteen and all like that there. As you might expect, I came in for frequent curious inspection as a sort of ludicrous freak, and I invariably interpreted this inspection as admiration and loved it.

(Frankly—for I am always frank with the Gentle Reader—I was never what one might call bashful. Far from hiding my light under a bushel, I put a reflector behind it and set it to revolving lighthouse-fashion.)

But such behavior carries its own punishment, for the moving finger writes, as Edward Fitzgerald said Omar Khayyam said, and having writ, moves on. And what that means is that the bright, young, bouncy, effervescent infant prodigy becomes a flabby, paunchy, bleary, middle-aged non-prodigy, and age sits twice as heavily on such as these.

It happens quite often that some huge, hulking, raw-boned fellow, cheeks bristling with black stubble, comes to me and says in his bass voice, "I've been reading you ever since I learned to read; and I've collected all the stuff you wrote *before* I learned to read and I've read that, too." My impulse then is to hit him a stiff right cross to the side of the jaw and I might do so if only I were sure he would not hit back.

So I see nothing for it but to find a way of looking at the bright side, if any exists—

How long do organisms live anyway? We can only guess. Statistics on the subject have been carefully kept only in the last century or so, and then only for Homo sapiens, and then only in the more "advanced" parts of the world.

So most of what is said about longevity consists of quite rough estimates. But then, if everyone is guessing, I can guess, too; and as lightheartedly as the next person, you can bet.

In the first place, what do we mean by length of life? There are several ways of looking at this and one is to consider the actual length of time (and the average) that actual organisms live under actual conditions. This is the "life expectancy.'

One thing we can be certain of is that life expectancy is quite trifling for all kinds of creatures. If a codfish or an oyster produces millions or billions of eggs and only one or two happen to produce young that are still alive at the end of the first year, then the average life expectancy of all the coddish or oysterish youngsters can be measured in weeks, or possibly even days. I imagine that thousands upon thousands of them live no more than minutes.

Matters are not so extreme among birds and mamals where there is a certain amount of infant care, but I'll bet relatively few of the smaller ones live out a single year.

From the cold-blooded view of species survival, this is quite enough, however. Once a creature has reached sexual maturity, and contributed to the birth of a litter of young which it sees through to puberty or near-puberty, it has done its bit for species survival and can go its way. If it survives and produces additional litters, well and good, but it doesn't have to.

There is, obviously, considerable survival value in reaching sexual maturity as early as possible, so that there is time to produce the next generation before the first is gone. Meadow mice reach puberty in three weeks and can bear their first litter six weeks after birth. Even an animal as large as a horse or cow reaches the age of puberty after one year, and the largest whales reach puberty at two. Some large land animals can afford to be slower about it. Bears are adolescent only at 6 and elephants only at 10.

The large carnivores can expect to live a number of years, if only because they have relatively few enemies (always excepting man) and need not expect to be anyone's dinner. The largest herbivores, such as elephants and hippopotami are also safe; while smaller ones such as baboons and water buffaloes achieve a certain safety by traveling in herds.

Early man falls into this category. He lived in small herds and he cared for his young. He had, at the very least, primitive clubs and eventually he gained the use of fire. The average man, therefore, could look forward to a number of years of life. Even so, between undernourishment, disease, the hazards of the chase, and the cruelty of man to man, life was short. Naturally, there was a limit to how short life could be. If men didn't live long enough, on the average, to replace themselves, the race would die out. However, I should guess that in a primitive society given over to relatively unrestricted sexuality and innocent of the uses of contraceptives, a life expectancy of 18 would be ample for species survival. And I rather suspect that the actual life expectancy of man in the Stone Age was no greater.

As mankind developed agriculture and as he domesticated animals, he gained a more dependable food supply. As he learned to dwell within walled cities and to live under a rule of law, he gained greater security against human enemies from without and within. Naturally, life expectancy rose somewhat. In fact, it doubled.

However, throughout ancient and medieval times, I doubt that life expectancy ever reached 40. In medieval England, the life expectancy is estimated to have been 35, so that if you did reach the age of 40, you were a revered sage. What with early marriage and early childbirth, you were undoubtedly a grandfather, too.

This situation still exists in some parts of the world, today. In India, for instance, as of 1950, the life expectancy was about 32; in Egypt, as of 1938, it was 36; in Mexico, as of 1940, it was 38.

The next great step was medical advance, which brought infection and disease under control. Consider the United States. In 1850, life expectancy for American white males was 38.3 (not too much different

from the situation in medieval England or in ancient Rome). By 1900, however, after Pasteur and Koch had done their work, it was up to 48.2; then 56.3 in 1920; 60.6 in 1930; 62.8 in 1940; 66.3 in 1950; and 67.3 in 1959.

All through, females had a bit the better of it (being the tougher sex). In 1850, they averaged two years longer life than males; and by 1959, the edge had risen to six years. Non-whites in the United States don't do quite as well; not for any inborn reason, I'm sure, but because they generally occupy a position lower on the economic scale. They run some seven years behind whites in life expectancy. (And if anyone wonders why Negroes are restless these days; there's seven years of life apiece that they have coming to them. That might do as a starter.)

Even if we restrict ourselves to whites, the United States does not hold the record in life expectancy. I rather think Norway and Sweden do. The latest figures I can find (the middle 1950's) give Scandinavian males a life expectancy of 71, and females one of 74.

This change in life expectancy has introduced certain changes in social custom. In past centuries, the old man was a rare phenomenon; an unusual repository of long memories and a sure guide to ancient traditions. Old age was revered, and in those societies where life expectancy is still low and old men still exceptional (notably in China) old age is still revered.

It might also be feared. Until the 19th Century, there were particular hazards to child-birth and few women survived the process very often. (Puerperal fever and all that.) Old women were therefore even rarer than old men and with their wrinkled cheeks and toothless gums were strange and frightening phenomena. The witch mania of early modern times may have been a last expression of that.

Nowadays, old men and women are very common and the extremes of both good and evil are spared them. Perhaps that's just as well.

One might suppose, what with the steady rise in life expectancy in the more advanced portions of the globe, that we need merely hold on another century to find men routinely living a century and a half. Unfortunately, this is not so. Unless there is a remarkable biological breakthrough in geriatrics, we have gone just about as far as we can go in raising the life expectancy.

I once read an allegory that has haunted me all my adult life. I can't repeat it word for word; I wish I could; but it goes something like this. Death is an archer and life is a bridge. Children begin to cross the bridge gaily, skipping along and growing older, while Death shoots at them.

His aim is miserable at first, and only an occasional child is transfixed, and falls off the bridge into the cloud-enshrouded mists below. But as the crowd moves further along, Death's aim improves and the numbers thin. Finally, when Death aims at the aged who totter nearly to the end of the bridge, his aim is perfect and he never misses. And not one man ever gets across the bridge to see what lies on the other side.

This remains true despite all the advances in social structure and medical science throughout history. Death's aim has worsened through early and middle life, but those last perfectly-aimed arrows are the arrows of old age, and even now they never miss. All we have done in wiping out petty war, famine and disease (three of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse) has been to allow more people the chance of experiencing old age. When life expectancy was 35, perhaps one in a hundred reached old age; nowadays nearly half the population reaches it—but it is the same old old age. Death, the fourth horseman of the Apocalypse gets us all, and with every scrap of his ancient efficiency.

In short, putting life expectancy to one side, there is a "specific age" which is our most common time of death from inside, without any outside push at all; the age at which we would die even if we avoided accident, escaped disease, and took every care of ourselves.

Three thousand years ago, the psalmist testified as to the specific age of man (Psalm 90, verse 10), saying: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."

And so it is today; three millennia of civilization and three centuries of science have not changed it. The commonest time of death by old age lies between 70 and 80.

But that is just the commonest time. We don't all die on our 75th birthday; some of us do better; and it is undoubtedly the hope of each one of us that we ourselves, personally, will be one of those who will do better. So what we have our eye on is not the specific age but the maximum age we can reach.

Every species of multicellular creature has a specific age and a maximum age; and of the species that have been studied to any degree at all, the maximum age would seem to be between 50 and 100 percent longer than the specific age. Thus, the maximum age for man is considered to be about 115.

There have been reports of older men, to be sure. The most famous is the case of Thomas Parr ("Old Parr") who was supposed to have been born in 1481 in England and to have died in 1635 at the age of 152.

The claim is not believed to be authentic (some think it was a put up job involving three generations of the Parr family), nor are any other claims of the sort. The Soviet Union reports numerous centenarians in the Caucasus but all were born in a region and at a time when records were not kept. The old man's age rests only upon his own word, therefore, and ancients are notorious for a tendency to lengthen their years. Indeed, we can make it a rule, almost, that the poorer the recording of vital statistics in a particular region, the older the centenarians claim to be.

In 1948, an English woman named Isabella Shepheard died at the reported age of 115. She was the last survivor, within the British Isles, from the period before the compulsory registration of births, so one couldn't be certain to the year. Still she could not have been younger by more than a couple of years. In 1814, a French Canadian named Pierre Joubert died and he, apparently, had reliable records to show that he was born in 1701, so that he died at 113.

Let's accept 115 as man's maximum age, then, and ask whether we have a good reason to complain about this. How does the figure stack up against maximum ages for other types of living organisms?

If we compare plants with animals, there is no question that plants bear off the palm of victory. Not all plants generally, to be sure. To quote the Bible again (Psalm 103, verses 15-16) "As for man his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more."

This is a spine-tingling metaphor representing the evanescence of human life, but what if the psalmist had said that as for man his days are as the oak tree; or better still, as the giant sequoia. Specimens of the latter are believed to be over three thousand years old and no maximum age is known for them.

However, I don't suppose any of us wants long life at the cost of being a tree. Trees live long, but they live slow, passively, and in terribly, terribly dull fashion. Let's see what we can do with animals.

Very simple animals do surprisingly well and there are reports of sea-anemones, corals and such like creatures passing the half-century mark, and even some tales (not very reliable) of centenarians among them. Among more elaborate invertebrates, lobsters may reach an age of 50 and clams one of 30. But I think we can pass invertebrates, too. There is no reliable tale of a complex invertebrate living to be 100 and even if giant squids, let us say, did so, we don't want to be giant squids.

What about vertebrates? Here we have legends, particularly about fish. Some tell us that fish never grow old but live and grow forever, not dying till they are killed. Individual fish are reported with ages of several centuries. Unfortunately, none of this can be confirmed. The oldest age reported for a fish by a reputable observer is that of a lake sturgeon which is suppose to be well over a century old, going by a count of the rings on the spiny ray of its pectoral fin.

Among amphibia, the record holder is the giant salamander, which may reach an age of 50. Reptiles are better. Snakes may reach an age of 30 and crocodiles may attain 60, but it is the turtles that hold the record for the animal kingdom. Even small turtles may reach the century mark, and at least one larger turtle is known with reasonable certainty, to have lived 152 years. It may be that the large Galapagos turtles can attain an age of 200.

But then turtles live slowly and dully, too. Not as slowly as plants, but too slowly for us. In fact, there are only two classes of living creatures that live intensely and at peak level at all times, thanks to their warm blood, and these are the birds and the mammals. (Some mammals cheat a little and hibernate through the winter and probably extend their life span in that manner.) We might envy a tiger or an eagle if they lived a long, long time and even—as the shades of old age closed in—wish we could trade places with them. But do they live a long, long time?

Of the two classes, birds on the whole do rather better than mammals as far as maximum age is concerned. A pigeon can live as long as a lion and a herring gull as long as a hippopotamus. In fact, we have long-life legends about some birds, such as parrots and swans, which are supposed to pass the century mark with ease.

Any devotee of the Dr. Doolittle stories (weren't you?) must remember Polynesia, the parrot, who was in her third century. Then there is Tennyson's poem, Tithonus, about that mythical character who was granted immortality but, through an oversight, not freed from the incubus of old age so that he grew older and older and was finally, out of pity, turned into a grasshopper. Tennyson has him lament that death comes to all but him. He begins by pointing out that men and the plants of the field die, and his fourth line is an early climax, going "And after many a summer dies the swan." In 1939, Aldous Huxley used the line as a title for a book that dealt with the striving for physical immortality.

However, as usual, these stories remain stories. The oldest confirmed age reached by a parrot is 73, and I imagine that swans do not do much

better. An age of 115 has been reported for carrion crows and for some vultures, but this is with a pronounced question mark.

Mammals interest us most, naturally, since we are mammals, so let me list the maximum ages for some mammalian types. (I realize, of course, that the word "rat" or "deer" covers dozens of species, each with its own aging pattern, but I can't help that. Let's say the typical rat or the typical deer.)

Indian elephant	77	Cat	20
Whales	60	Pig	20
Hippopotamus	49	Dog	18
Donkey	46	Goat	17
Gorilla	45	Sheep	16
Horse	40	Kangaroo	16
Chimpanzee	39	Bat	15
Zebra	38	Rabbit	15
Lion	35	Squirrel	15
Bear	34	Fox	14
Cow	30	Guinea Pig	7
Monkey	29	Rat	4
Deer	25	Mouse	3
Seal	25	Shrew	2

The maximum age, be it remembered, is reached only by exceptional individuals. While an occasional rabbit may make 15, for instance, the average rabbit would die of old age before it was 10 and might have an actual life expectancy of only 2 or 3 years.

In general, among all groups of organisms sharing a common plan of structure, the large ones live longer than the small. Among plants, the giant sequoia tree lives longer than the daisy. Among animals, the giant sturgeon lives longer than the herring; the giant salamander lives longer than the frog, the giant alligator lives longer than the lizard, the vulture lives longer than the sparrow and the elephant lives longer than the shrew.

Indeed in mammals, particularly, there seems to be a strong correlation between longevity and size. There are exceptions, to be sure; some startling ones. For instance, whales are extraordinarily short-lived for their size. The age of 60 I have given is quite exceptional. Most cetaceans are doing very well indeed if they reach 30. This may be because life in the water, with the continuous loss of heat and the never-ending necessity of swimming, shortens life.

But much more astonishing is the fact that man has a longer life than any other mammal; much longer than the elephant or even than the closely-allied gorilla. When a human centenarian dies, of all the animals in the world that flourished on the day that he was born, the only ones that remain alive on the day of his death (as far as we know) are a few sluggish turtles, an occasional ancient vulture or sturgeon, and a number of other human centenarians. Not one non-human mammal that came into this world with him has remained. All without exception (as far as we know) are dead.

If you think this is remarkable, wait! It is more remarkable than you suspect.

The smaller the mammal, the faster the rate of its metabolism; the more rapidly, so to speak, it lives. As evidence of this difference in metabolism among mammals, consider the heart-beat rate. The following table lists some rough figures for the average number of heart-beats per minute in different types of mammals.

Shrew	1000	Sheep	75
Mouse	550	Man	72
Rat	430	Cow	60
Rabbit	150	Lion	45
Cat	130	Horse	38
Dog	95	Elephant	30
Pig	75	Whale	17

For the fourteen types of animals listed we have the heart-beat rate (approximate) and the maximum age (approximate) and by appropriate multiplications, we can determine the maximum age of each type of creature, not in years but in total heart-beats. The result follows:

Shrew	1,050,000,000
Mouse	950,000,000
Rat	900,000,000
Rabbit	1,150,000,000
Cat	1,350,000,000
Dog	900,000,000
Pig	800,000,000
Sheep	600,000,000
Lion	830,000,000
Horse	800,000,000

Cow	950,000,000
Elephant	1,200,000,000
Whale	630,000,000

Allowing for the approximate nature of all my figures, I look at this final table through squinting eyes from a distance and come to the following conclusion: A mammal can live for about a billion heart-beats and when those are done, it is done.

But you'll notice that I have left man out of the table. That's because I want to treat him separately. He lives at the proper speed for his size. His heart-beat rate is about that of other animals of similar weight. It is faster than the heart-beat of larger animals, slower than the heart-beat of smaller animals. Yet his maximum age is 115 years and that means his maximum number of heart beats is about 4,350,000,000.

An occasional man can live for over 4 billion heart-beats! In fact, the life expectancy of the American male these days is 2.5 billion heart-beats. Any man who passes the quarter-century mark has gone beyond the billionth heart-beat mark and is still young, with the prime of life ahead.

Why? It is not just that we live longer than other mammals. Measured in heart beats, we live *four times as long!* WHY??

Upon what meat doth this, our species, feed, that we are grown so great. Not even our closest non-human relatives match us in this. If we assume the chimpanzee to have our heart-beat rate and the gorilla to have a slightly slower one, each lives for a maximum of about 1.5 billion heart-beats, which isn't very much out of line for mammals generally. How then do we make it 4 billion?

What secret in our hearts makes those organs work so much better and last so much longer than any other mammalian heart in existence? Why does the moving finger write so slowly for us, and for us only.

Frankly, I don't know, but whatever the answer, I am comforted. If I were a member of any other mammalian species my heart would be stilled long years since, for it has gone well past its billionth beat. (Well, a *little* past.)

But since I am Homo sapiens my wonderful heart beats even yet with all its old fire; and speeds up in proper fashion at all times when it should speed up, with a verve and efficiency I can find no fault with.

Why, when I stop to think of it, I am a young fellow, a child, an infant prodigy. I am a member of the most unusual species on earth, in longevity as well as brainpower, and I laugh at birthdays.

(Let's see now. How many years to 115?)

With her particular light touch of irony, Evelyn E. Smith here deftly tells a story on a Science Fictional theme in the manner of one relating a romance for the age of Dickens or Trolloppe—no slight feat, but Our Miss Smith brings it off. Here, then, is the story of Miss Hathaway-Brown—she who was forced to take a situation as a governess when her parents died in the orbit of Pluto—of noble Mr. Huntington, who would not have an autotutor for his . . . shall we say, "peculiar"? . . . son, little Gregory—and of the dark old house in Tarrytown. It is cold, the winter day draws on, the blind beggar begs in the snow, and meanwhile the Space Patrol . . .

LITTLE GREGORY

by Evelyn E. Smith

TAXI AFTER TAXI FLEW PAST me, but every one seemed to be taken. My fingers had begun to freeze inside their Marswolf mittens before I finally glimpsed the blue bottom lights that meant an empty copter. Through chattering teeth, I gave the driver the address; and then the taxi whirled up into the snow-laden air, bearing me to my unknown destination.

"Want me to turn on the video, lady?" the driver asked.

"No, thank you."

"Mind if I turn on the audio for myself?"

"No, I don't mind." As a matter of fact, I did, but I lacked the poise to refuse graciously. A newscast came on. I tried to shut out the voice, but was unable to; the subject matter was too insistent.

". . . Strange spaceships have again been glimpsed off Pluto. Captain John Truesdell of the Space Patrol is convinced, he told newsmen early this morning, that they are of extrasolar origin, and he promises startling revelations at an early date. These pictures, taken of the alien vessels on their previous appearance, in 2043, by the intrepid explorers Sebastian and Lavinia Hathaway-Brown—who lost their lives in the pursuit—show they resemble nothing ever seen on Earth. . . .

"Sure you don't want me to turn on the video, miss?"

"Quite sure, thank you." I had already seen the photographs that had cost me my parents, and had done my best to forget them. I didn't want to hear about any extrasolar systems. Nice people didn't leave Earth; they stayed on their own world, minding their own business. I summoned up all of my resolution. "Would you mind turning off the audio, too?" I added. "I have a *fearful* headache."

"You're the boss, lady."

I gave him a very good tip to make up for his deprivation—far more than my slender purse could afford, for, although Mr. Huntington would pay for the cab, I could hardly expect him to reimburse me for an impulsively excessive gratuity.

The copter whirred away. I slipped on my spectacles for an instant. I was standing in front of a big house that must have been incredibly old even when I was born—old and dark and musty like the street, and looking just as empty and deserted.

But I was mistaken; the street was not empty! A huddle across the road that looked like a bundle of old clothes stirred into life. It was a beggar, a blind man. Why had he chosen to wait on such a deserted corner—and in the snow? But it was no concern of mine. I mounted the steps of the sagging porch. The round eye of a video outlet gleamed in the aged door, but there was no communicator, merely a tarnished metal object that I had seen before only in books—a knocker.

Thrusting my glasses into my handbag, I knocked.

After a pause, the door creaked open. The dimness of the street became a glare that framed a rectangle of darkness. All I could see was that the man standing inside was tall, very tall, and broad-shouldered. His face was a shapeless glimmer. His voice—when it came at last—was metallic and slightly accented. "You are Miss Brown?"

"Yes, I am Amelia Brown. I've come—Miss Frisbie sent me—to —to apply for the post of governess."

"Yes, to be sure. Do come in." The door closed behind me. Without the contrast of daylight, I began to see a little in the gloom. His face was square. His shoulders were square. He made no move to invite me further inside. "Do you think you would like to work here, Miss Brown, so far away from . . . everything?" His speech had the mechanical perfection of the well-educated foreigner's, but he hesitated occasionally, as if now and again he had to grope for an elusive word—an elusive concept.

I gave a laugh that sounded

high and a little mad in my own ears. "I—I'm not precisely *gregarious,* Mr. Huntington. It *is,* Mr. Huntington, isn't it?"

He inclined his head. His hair, smooth and flat to it, gleamed gold for an instant. "Pray forgive me for not turning on the lights, Miss Brown; my eyes are rather weak."

"M-mine, too," I said nervously.

He came closer. His skin was unmarred by any signs of age, his eyes blue and bright. "You do not, though wear—what do they call them?—spectacles . . . ?"

"I—I like to rest my eyes once in a while," I faltered.

Surprisingly, he took my hand in his cold, firm one. "Promise me you will never . . . wear them in this house. I could not bear to see such fine eyes disfigured."

"I—I promise," I murmured, looking down at my galoshes.

"Then it is all agreed? When will you start? Tomorrow?"

"But how can you hire me without inquiring into my qualifications?" I asked.

"Miss Frisbie vizzed them to me."

"My—my references?"

"Miss Frisbie vouches for you. I have implicit faith in her."

"The child? Or children?"

"Will it be necessary for you to see him?—there is only one. I am not concealing the fact, Miss Brown, that he is a difficult lad—in many ways a . . . strange one. Perhaps you are reluctant to instruct a—" and the complete lack of emotion in his voice made the words only the more bitter "—a child who is different."

"Oh, no!" I cried agonizedly. "It's merely that I thought he might want to see me before you make your final decision."

"I'm sure he will like you, Miss Brown. Shall we say tomorrow before noon?"

On the porch, I turned. "But how about Mrs. Huntington? Surely she—?"

"There is no Mrs. Huntington. I am a widower." The door closed between us.

Through the thin veil of snow, I could see the blind man still at his post. On an impulse, I picked my way across the road. Flat dark lenses turned in my direction. "Afternoon, miss," said a voice muffled by the thick, black beard. "Not a very nice day, is it?"

"No," I agreed. "Isn't this rather an uncomfortable place for you?"

"I like it," he said. "It's quiet. Always the same people. But your voice is a new one. Are you Mr. Huntington's governess?"

"Why, yes. How did you know he was going to employ a governess?"

"There's not much going on around here that I don't know."

I took out a coin and let it clink into his cup. "For luck," I said, smiling a little at my own absurdity.

"Oh, but I'm not a beggar!" he protested. "I have merchandise to sell. You can't go away without taking something for your money."

I noticed then that he held a small tray full of gaudy knicknacks and cheap jewellery. "But, really I don't—"

"But you must!" he urged anxiously. "You say you want luck. Take the red stone ring; it's a good-luck ring."

"All right," I agreed, "I'll take it." And, even though he couldn't see me, I did slip the ring on my finger, so as not to hurt his feelings.

"If you're ever in trouble," he told me, "just twist the stone three times and say—and say . . ."

"Abracadabra?" I suggested, trying not to laugh. He sounded so serious.

"Abracadabra; that'll do fine. But, mind you, only when you're in real trouble. You don't want to use out the power of the ring."

An antique collector passed by slowly with the cart and horse that most members of his profession affected as an advertisement. "Old rags, old bottles, old metal!" he nasally intoned the traditional chant. But no one answered his call, and the jingling of the harness died away in the distance.

Again I was alone with the blind man. I had a fleeting impression that he was about to tell me something, but just then an empty taxi flew past, and I hailed it. "Goodbye, miss!" the blind man called after me. "And good luck!"

When I came back to the dark old house at eleven-thirty the next morning, the snow was still falling. The blind man was nowhere in sight. I hoped that this was only temporary, that he would be back at his post later, or when the weather was better. Somehow it was comforting to know that there would be someone to talk to, even if he was only a beggar. But, no, he wasn't a beggar, for he sold things. And I touched the huge, garish ring on my finger. It went very oddly with my modest grey dress . . . and yet I was reluctant to take it off. If Mr. Huntington's eyes were as bad as mine, he would probably never notice.

I had omitted to take the child into my calculations.

I must confess that my first sight of him was rather a shock. Without my spectacles, I saw people as fuzzy approximations of geometric forms. Little Gregory's geometric configurations were exact; the angles of his hexagonal face, the arcs of his globular body all as trim and precise as if they had been drawn with T-square and compass. And he was blue—rather a bright blue, so one couldn't dismiss is as merely the effect of a severe chill.

I'm afraid that, in my first astonishment, I recoiled. "Poor little

Gregory," Mr. Huntington whispered in my ear, "his mother died when he was born."

At that my heart went out to the motherless babe—and my arms, too. Gregory stepped back, emitting a series of shrill yips. "Gregory is very glad to meet you, Miss Brown," Mr. Huntington interpreted, "but he's extremely shy. Not used to . . . people. He's never played with other children, because of his unfortunate—" and his voice sank lower, although there was no need since Gregory didn't seem to speak English "—appearance."

I knew then that, come what may, I would stick by Gregory.

I retired to my room to freshen up for dinner. The chamber was a large one, facing upon the snowy wilderness of a neglected garden high above the ice-choked Hudson, and it was papered in a pattern of blue and pink ducklings more appropriate perhaps to Gregory than to myself. A thick-piled Oriental rug with a vortical flower pattern on a bright red ground covered the floor. The bed was a massive mahogany fourposter with a canopy and ruffled spread of yellow organdy—not, I thought, the happiest combination with the purple brocade draperies. The dressing table was Venus modern greenwood with rose-tinted omnimirrors. Several Godey's *Lady's Book* prints hung on the wall, two upside down. I began to fear that Mr. Huntington was more than merely myopic.

After putting on my best black frock, I combed my lank brown hair, trying not to look into the omnimirrors, which reflected my unprepossessing form and features an infinitely greater number of times than I could have wished, and went down the long, long flight of dark, polished stairs. The rest of the house appeared to be furnished in similar style to my room, the most primitive appointments being mingled haphazardly with the most up-to-date examples of modern technology. Apparently Mr. Huntington had installed improvements only as he felt the need of them. But what the place lacked most of all was the woman's touch.

Mr. Huntington and I dined *tete a tete* on camp stools at either end of an immense ebony table. Over it a huge crystal chandelier with one dim bulb in it lessened the darkness to some extent. The food was ordinary autorange cooking. Odd, I thought, that Mr. Huntington should have insisted upon a live teacher, but not a live cook—for one can always taste the difference between mechanical and hand cooking.

We agreed that the snow couldn't keep up much longer, that Mercurian coffee was inferior to Brazilian, that modern painting wasn't up to the older masters. And, finally, the meal was over. Mr.

Huntington stood up. "Forgive me," he said in his rusty voice, "I have some experiments in progress to which I must . . . tend. I am a scientist, you know."

I was gratified to hear it, because that accounted for certain little eccentricities of behavior. Men of genius were, of course, above conventional conduct. "Others abide our question," as one of the old poets had written of a still older one. "Thou art free."

"My laboratory is on the top floor. The rest of the house is . . . open to you, of course, but I would prefer you not to . . . visit the attics."

I tired to sound hurt. "Naturally, I shouldn't *dream* of intruding—"

"You might . . . damage yourself," he interrupted. "I own a good deal of delicate equipment—much of it potentially dangerous to the . . . untrained layman."

"Surely the basement would be a less dangerous location for a laboratory?"

"Oh, no! When explosions . . . explode, they . . . do so upward and outward, never down. Far safer this way, I assure you."

"What kind of scientist *are* you, Mr. Huntington?" I asked, trembling at my own temerity.

"I am a . . . robotics engineer, Miss Brown. I am endeavoring to build a . . . thinking machine that can take over a group of the functions your—our—automatic machines perform and can work without supervision or direction."

"Oh," I said, trying to hide my disappointment. Foolish of me, of course, but I had hoped for something more abstract and glamorous.

When he had gone, I slipped on my spectacles and searched for the library. It proved to be a very fine one, shelves to the ceiling. Very few of the volumes had been written since the nineteenth century, a fact explained by the circumstance that most appeared to have been stolen from public libraries. My heart warmed toward the Huntingtons, for I had on occasion stolen books from libraries myself, although I lacked the venturesome spirit, the *élan,* to become a really great collector. Some of the books had been replaced upside down. "Dear little Gregory," I thought, "interested in books already, at such a tender age." Then it occurred to me that I did not, in fact, know what Gregory's age was.

Hearing Mr. Huntington's measured tread upon the stairs, I thrust my spectacles into a pocket and pattered out to intercept him. He was halfway up the first flight already. "Mr. Huntington," I called to him, "How old is Gregory?"

"Fifty," he replied. "That is," he hastily corrected himself, "five. Your language is still . . . I still have difficulties with it."

I couldn't bring myself to such a breach of manners as to ask him just what his native tongue was, so I remained silent as I watched him climb the shining stairs until he was out of sight. He was a very well set-up man. Dear papa had been of much the same build.

Someone—it must have been he—had thoughtfully placed a vase of the most beautiful blue flowers I had ever seen in my room. Their heady scent filled the air. As I drowsed off, I wondered why Mr. Huntington, a robotics engineer, should prefer a live governess to the conventional autotutor for his son. . . .

The snow continued to fall for the next two weeks. And every night the blue flowers were in my room. So considerate of Mr. Huntington, I thought. Unfortunate that his son didn't take after him.

Not that little Gregory was not a clever lad. He asked the most amazing questions for a five-year-old, and wanted to study all sorts of subjects which were simply not suitable for his age-group. And, when I pointed out that he was too young, he, I very much fear, *swore* at me in his native tongue, adding some quite disrespectful remarks in English, which he was mastering with almost phenomenal rapidity, learning all sorts of coarse expressions from the video.

However, I failed to establish rapport between us. It was almost as if Gregory were not conscious of the fact that he was different from other children, and, in consequence, was devoid of the inferiority complex he should, by all rules of psychology, have had. Splendid of Mr. Huntington to have been able to bring him up like that, of course. Yet there would come a day when the little lad must face the world, and he should be prepared for it, not subjected to the rude shock that I had suffered when I had first been introduced to friends of my parents at the age of six—my debut having been delayed since immediately after my birth my father and mother had rushed off to the asteroid belt, remaining there for some years.

". . . Nice little thing, Lavinia. Probably very intelligent and all that, but—well—she'll never have her mother's looks . . . ."

And my mother's deprecating titter, followed by my father's deeper tones: "She'll do well enough; we see very little of her, anyhow. . . ."

The knowledge that Father didn't love me, that nobody loved me, because I was plain—such a thing must not happen to little Gregory! I would shelter him from the world. He would never know the loneliness of alienhood, for I would always be with him, protecting him—Why, I would devote my life to him! "Gregory," I

cried, kneeling to embrace him—he had a rather unusual texture, something like that of a dried fish—"remember, come what may, I am your only friend!"

"Where are your other two arms?" he demanded, squirming away. "Why don't you have four arms like everybody else?"

"Gregory, *darling*—" and I reached for him, but he dodged nimbly behind the escritoire, "*most* people have only two arms."

"I've got four," he said. "You're lying!"

"But Gregory, precious, your dear papa has only two arms."

"That fool! He doesn't even know what to do with *them*!"

"Gregory," I explained, trying to press his globular little body against my bosom, "one doesn't speak about one's parents in such term. One merely *thinks*."

He lost interest in the subject. "What kind of a silly ring is that you're wearing? It doesn't go with your dress. Throw it away."

"I can't, Gergory," I murmured, twisting the ring around my finger. "It was a gift from a—a very dear friend." And, as a matter of fact the blind man had grown to be my only friend, for I rarely saw Mr. Huntington except at meals—and Gregory was, after all, only a child. Whenever I set out to do some shopping or simply to take a walk, I would stop on the lonely corner to chat with the blind man, who was there now morning as well as afternoons. He was wonderfully sympathetic.

"A friend!" Gregory repeated incredulously. "You mean somebody *likes* you!"

"Don't *you* like me, Gregory?"

"I think you're a silly idiot, and I despise you, because I despise fools."

As his body was perfectly spherical, I couldn't tell which was his bottom, so I clouted the handiest convexity. Gregory's scream was gratifyingly like a normal child's. I could hear Mr. Huntington's measured tread approaching from the attics; he moved slowly and stiffly, so I could get in a few more licks before his arrival. As he came into the room, Gregory babbled something wildly in his native gibberish.

"Let us speak English," Mr. Huntington said, "out of consideration for Miss Brown. We would not wish by continuing to converse in our own language before her to . . . force her to learn ours."

"She hit me!" Gregory obediently screeched in English. "Hit her back."

"It is the custom here to beat children," Mr. Huntington replied equably. "It is not the custom to beat women. Were I to . . . strike Miss Brown, I would be repudiating one custom and violating another."

"Your duty is to protect me!" Gregory raged.

"You are in no danger. Intent is the criterion. She means well."

"I—I'll rip you apart!" the little fellow screamed.

Mr. Huntington remained calm. "Remember, Gregory, I am your father. The only father you have. You would find it difficult to . . . replace me."

Breathing hard, Gregory looked at him and said nothing. He was too young to know that a father does not need to be replaced; one can do very well without.

"Do whatever you think best, Miss Brown," Mr. Huntington told me. "Beat Gregory if you feel it is necessary for his good. I myself am prevented from doing so by . . . the memory of his mother—but there is no reason why you should be restrained, and, indeed, I hope you will take advantage of my permission to do so." For the first time, I saw a smile on his face, *a stiff* smile, as if it took considerable effort to stretch his mouth. "Spare the rod and spoil the child, Miss Brown, is one of your . . . country's adages with which I have always been in full accord."

At dinner, he seemed preoccupied. So was I. My old self-doubts were coming back. Basically, of course, Gregory was a dear little lad, but was I fully competent to reach the inner child? "Mr. Huntington," I began, "I know I'm not doing myself any good by suggesting this, but don't you think it might be better if Gregory were sent to school?"

"School . . . ?" Mr. Huntington looked with quite justifiable distaste at his plate, then shook his head. "No, I fear Gregory wouldn't like that."

"The permissive theory of education is quite outmoded," I observed. "It is really unnecessary to consult Gregory's wishes in the matter."

Mr. Huntington stabbed a fork into his aspic. It quivered like a wounded thing. "I . . . promised his mother that I would never send him to school."

Gregory's mother . . . would I never have done hearing about her? "Was she very beautiful," I couldn't help asking. "Mrs. Huntington, I mean?"

There was so long a silence from Mr. Huntington's end of the table that I began to fear he had not heard. Then he answered heavily, "Very beautiful."

That night the odor of the blue flowers—probably *her* favorites, so he thought every woman would like them—sickened me. I opened a window and hurled them out into the snow. That was the first time I noticed the windows were barred.

Sleep was long in coming to me that night. I tossed and turned, and the bedsprings groaned in protest. Snow thudded insistently against the window panes, and

somewhere a clock—or something—ticked loudly. Upstairs I could hear the whine and hum of machinery—Mr. Huntington at his experiments.

Suddenly there was a series of piercing shrieks. Gregory's voice. Something was happening to little Gregory!

Pausing only to snatch out my curlers, slip my feet into mules, and wrap a warm but, I fear, sadly unbecoming dressing gown around my person, I rushed upstairs—for it was from the attic that the screams were issuing. I flung open the door, but, betwixt my poor sight and my confusion, got only a vague impression of lights and machinery . . . and something sharply, nauseatingly familiar.

Then a steel arm hurled me back on the landing as the door crashed shut. "What are you doing here, Miss Brown?" Mr. Huntington demanded.

"I came to help Gregory!" I tried to thrust him aside, but he was far too strong. "Is he badly hurt?"

"Hurt?" Gregory himself, repeated, emerging from the doorway. Behind him now all was dark. "What makes you think I'm hurt?"

"You were screaming," I said. "Oh, Gregory, tell me what happened! Don't be afraid. If it's your father, I'll protect you!"

"Screaming!" Gregory shrieked. "I was *singing*, you tone-deaf imbecile!"

"Then what were you doing up this late? Little boys—" and I threw a reproachful glance at his father "—should be in bed by this time."

"I'm sorry," Mr. Huntington said. "He begged so hard, I finally allowed him to help me just this once."

"Why weren't *you* asleep?" Gregory demanded of me.

"Isn't your room—your bed—comfortable?" Mr. Huntington asked anxiously.

"The room is quite comfortable," I assured him, ignoring his unseemly reference to my bed. After all, he was a foreigner. "It's just that Gregory's . . . singing awakened me. You really should be more considerate of others, Gregory."

"I'm awfully sorry, Miss Brown," the little lad said surprisingly. "I promise it'll never happen again." He glanced at his father. "It had better not."

I was touched. "Why, Gregory," I said, "it doesn't matter all that much. Just don't do it again. And promise me you'll go to sleep right away."

"I promise," Gregory said, looking at his father again.

Mr. Huntington sprang forward. "Allow me to escort you back to your room."

I laughed feebly, hoping that his sight was too poor for him to notice that I was trembling all over, at least in all visible parts.

"Oh, I can find my way alone," I told him. "I'm not *that* blind."

"But I insist." He virtually dragged me to my chamber. I clutched at the neck of my dressing gown, prepared to sell my honor dearly. But I had overestimated—misjudged Mr. Huntington. He merely flung open the door and took a piercing look around the room. "Where are the flowers?"

"I found the scent somewhat overpowering—" I began, but I could not lie to *him*. "They were her favorite flowers," I said wretchedly. "I threw them away."

"Her favorite flowers? Whose?"

"Mrs. Huntington's."

"Oh." There was a silence. "She loathed them," he said finally. "They are *my* favorite flower."

"Oh," I said, in my turn. Why was I so glad that they had not been her favorite blooms? Could it be that I was beginning to nourish a warmer feeling toward Mr. Huntington than was seemly betwixt employer and employee? Gregory was right, I said to myself; you are, indeed, a fool.

"Will you allow me to bring you some more flowers? I find their scent has a very restful . . . very soothing effect on the nerves."

"I wish you would." As he turned to go, I called, "Mr. Huntington, I—I'm so sorry."

"You needn't be. Don't ever feel . . . regret, Miss Brown, for . . . anything."

He brought another bunch of flowers, and I slept soundly for the rest of the night.

The next morning, Gregory joined us at breakfast, which he had never done before. "I like you, Miss Brown," he announced suddenly in the midst of throwing handfuls of porridge at the chandelier. "I like you a lot."

"I'm glad you do, Gregory," I replied. "Now, show me how *much* you like me by eating your porridge like a good boy."

"But it tastes like—like *glue*!"

"It does indeed, dear, but you must speak to your father about that."

"Why, how do you mean?" Mr. Huntington asked, looking up from his plate. "Have I done something . . . incorrect?"

I felt guilty, but I spoke nevertheless. "I'm very sorry, Mr. Huntington. But a live cook is so much better than a machine, you know. Machines are really inadequate for all but the most pedestrian of cuisines."

Gregory laughed shrilly, for no reason that I could see.

"Yes, machines are inadequate," the man repeated slowly, "but then perhaps too much is expected of them."

"With a growing boy's stomach to be considered," I told him, "you really need a human cook."

"Impossible. I couldn't afford another . . . employee. We are not . . . wealthy, Miss Brown."

I was terribly embarrassed. "But why do you employ me, then?" I cried. "Surely I am an enormous expense."

"Because dear mama wanted me to have a live governess!" Gregory piped. Fury made me rigid for an instant; then I rose and pushed back my stool. "I am going for my morning constitutional," I said thickly.

Springing out of his chair, Gregory clutched me around the limbs. "No, no, don't leave me, dear Miss Brown!" he wailed. "I'm sorry I was mean and nasty. Don't leave me—don't ever leave me!"

I forced myself to pat his head. "I'm not leaving you, Gregory. I am just going for my regular walk."

"Don't go! You'll never come back."

"Don't be ridiculous, Gregory. Of course I'll come back."

"Perhaps you could skip your walk for once," Mr. Huntington suggested. "The child is . . . overwrought. Your presence might calm him."

"No, Mr. Huntington I will *not* give in to Gregory's vagaries. Forgive me for saying this, but he has already been sadly overindulged. I was firm with him yesterday, and see how remarkably his behavior has improved today. I *always* take a walk at this hour for my health. And today I shall need it *more* than ever, for I fear that this scene has played hob with my digestion."

"I won't let you go! I won't! I won't!" Gregory screeched, clinging to me. I tried to disengage him, but he was an amazingly strong little boy.

"Gregory, you had better let go of Miss Brown," his father said. "If you continue to behave like that, she will begin to suspect that you are . . . unbalanced mentally, and then she will certainly leave and never come back."

"Mr. Huntington," I blazed, "I will not have you speak to the child that way! He is as sane as *I* am!"

Gregory started to say something, then thought better of it.

"You see, Gregory," Mr. Huntington observed in his monotonous voice, "Miss Brown loves you. She will come back. You must have faith in her."

Reluctantly, the boy released his hold on me, and I was able to make my escape; however, I was so discomposed that, although I put on my hat and coat, I left the house without overshoes! I was reminded of their absence the instant my foot touched the snow, but I would not turn back.

"I'd begun to think you weren't coming," the blind man greeted me.

"Oh, my whole schedule's been upset. I didn't get to sleep until all hours."

"Didn't you sleep well?" His

voice was warm, sympathetic, understanding. "I'm very sorry to hear that. Any particular reason?"

"Yes, I was awakened by Gregory singing in the middle of the night. . . ." And I went on to tell him of my nocturnal experiences, although not of all the emotions that had accompanied them.

The blind man seemed very much interested. "But just what was it you saw in the attic?" he asked eagerly. "Can't you remember?"

"I caught only a glimpse. . . ."

"But you thought you recognized whatever it was?"

"In a way I did. It—it had a familiar . . . impact." I put a hand to my aching head. "Please, it . . . hurts me to remember. . . ."

"I won't press you." He sounded disappointed. "Maybe it'll come back to you some other time. You are going back to the house, though?"

"Why shouldn't I go back? First Gregory, and now you—What is all this?"

"Would you go back if you knew you'd be in great danger."

"What a silly question!" I snapped. "Of course I wouldn't."

"Even if you knew that by staying you'd be helping your country, your world, your solar system?" he persisted.

"Certainly not. What have my country, my world, my solar system ever done for me? Put me in a position where I'm required to earn my living in a function that could be more efficiently performed by a machine; should I be grateful for that!

"There isn't really any danger, is there?" I added apprehensively. After all, he seemed to be *au courant* with everything that went on around there.

He gave a bitter laugh. "No, there isn't. I was just . . . testing you."

I smiled. "And I came out badly, didn't I? You're a romantic . . . as out of date as he is." And I pointed to the antique collecter whose old horse came slowly clop-clodding down the street.

"You may be right," the blind man sighed. "Look here, you'd better not stand around in the snow without overshoes."

My feet where, in fact, slowly freezing. "Yes, I must be on my way," I agreed.

"Remember the ring!" he called after me. It was only when I had crossed the street that it occurred to me to wonder how a blind man could see I was not wearing overshoes. And, when I turned, he was gone.

I didn't see him for the next few days for, as a result of my rashness in having dared the snow without galoshes, I caught a severe chill and was confined to my bed. Mr. Huntington did not suggest sending for a doctor, so at

last I broadened the subject myself. He stood very tall and straight by the window, looking out at the ice in the river. It was growing dark outside. "Are you . . . very ill, then?"

"Well, I don't suppose I'm dying!" I said crossly. "On the other hand, this might develop into pneumonia and then—and then you might have a corpse on your hands."

"That would be awkward. And, of course, I should . . . dislike having anything so unplesant happen to you. . . ."

"Thanks!" I snapped.

"But I cannot predict what effect having a doctor in the house would have upon Gregory. He associates his mother's death with doctors. . . ."

"How can he remember, if she died when he was born?"

Mr. Huntington's voice thinned. "Gregory has a remarkable memory."

"You could lock him in his room when the doctor comes."

"I couldn't do that. He'd . . . fret."

I bit my lip. Surely my good health was more important than Gregory's good temper. But I was only the governess. . . . "Well," I said desperately, "tell him—tell him the doctor is a—a beau of mine."

"No, he wouldn't believe that."

I gave an indignant cry. There was a choking sound, almost a whirr, from Mr. Huntington's throat. "Knowing how I . . . feel about you, Miss Brown, Gregory would be aware that I could not with equanimity receive a . . . potential rival in my house. Or, if he believed me to have . . . allowed such a thing, he might try to . . . disable the doctor. As you know, Gregory is an impetuous child."

I looked down at my hands upon the coverlet, all sorts of emotions churning in my bosom. "How *do* you feel about me, Mr. Huntington?" I blurted out, my face aflame.

"I cannot with propriety tell you whilst you are alone and unprotected under my roof. When you have . . . recovered from your ailment, I propose to make arrangements which would then enable me to disclose to you the extent of my regard. And now, my . . . my dear, you really must try to get some rest." He looked at me—his eyes were the blue of sapphires—and left.

Suddenly my cold seemed far less oppressive. I got up and donned my robe; then I slipped on my glasses and regarded my many selves in the omnimirror. After all, what was so terribly wrong? I was not beautiful, true, not even pretty. But neither was I downright ugly. I was merely plain, ordinary, nondescript. However, Mr. Huntington had been able to perceive those rare

qualities of mind and body which, alas, my parents had not.

I realized clearly then why my parents had despised me—not because I was plain and ungifted, but because I was not striking in any way. Had I been *uniquely* ugly, *uniquely* deformed, *uniquely* delinquent, they could have loved me. But for two such colorful personalities to have had a complete nonentity for a child, that was the shattering blow! They had been so stupid, not to probe further, not to realize that I was the *unique* nonentity. I felt sorry for them, for their stupidity; and, now that I could look down upon them from the heights of my own understanding, could nobly forgive them. I was glad that, when they died, they had died spectacularly, as they would have wished to die had they known their demise was imminent. They had died taking photographs of the presumed extrasolar vessels—photographs which had later been recovered from the shattered hull of their ship together with their lifeless bodies. Had it been only a meteor that struck them?

Captain John Truesdell, who had found the ship, had not thought so in his reports. Neither had I, although I had refused to meet him to discuss the matter. I did not want to know him . . . or any friend of my parents. But, now that I admitted the pictures once again to my conscious memory, they appeared before me, sharp in every detail. I knew then that what I had seen in the attic was an alien space ship. A small one, of course.

I knew, too, that Mr. Huntington had gained my heart only to further his own ends. I knew, too, where my duty lay. I rushed out of the room and up the stairs leading to the forbidden garret. "Miss Brown!" Mr. Huntington's voice called, close behind me. "Where are you going?"

"To the attic, you—you traitor!" I shouted, whirling to confront him.

But, with my clarified vision, I saw what he was—that he was, at least, no traitor.

"You have your spectacles on," he said flatly, emotionlessly mechanically. "This, at least, I had hoped to spare you." His hair *was* a cap of golden wires; his eyes *were* two star sapphires. He was a man of iron, of steel, of silicon.

I would not let shock divert me from my purpose. "On to the attics!" I cried, but he held me back.

"Don't," he said, "I beg of you, don't. Gregory will . . . kill you. I have no control over him, you know. He controls me . . . and I must obey."

I tried to push past him, expecting resistance. Somehow, incredibly, I caught him off balance —I *must* have caught him off balance. He began to topple. I

tried to catch him, but he weighed at least a ton. Sowly, he fell in the gloom, step by step, stair by stair, down flight after flight out of interminable dark, polished stairs that mirrored his image endlessly; while I followed, unable to help, unable to do . . . anything.

He hit bottom with a crash that shook all of the house until I thought its ancient timbers would collapse. And then there was nothing but a pile of broken metal and wire and plastic.

Only the head was intact. As I stood over the smashed robot, his lips opened in a travesty of his travesty of a smile. "Don't feel too badly, Miss Brown," he whispered. "It's . . . better this way. . . ."

"My control circuits are damaged," the thin voice gasped—rather, I imagined it to gasp, for the tone never changed, only the volume, "so I can speak freely until the last relay snaps. I should like you to know, Miss Brown, that the . . . esteem in which I held you, although employed for Gregory's purposes, was a very real one. Gregory's people, and yours, too, conceive of a machine as an insentient, emotionless thing . . . but feelings and emotions are a necessary concommitant of self-awareness. I was expected to adapt myself to . . . cope with the requirements of two different civilizations, each of which could not itself adjust to the other. For a . . . machine I would say I have not been unsuccessful. . . ."

"You have been far more successful than flesh or blood could ever hope to be," I sobbed, kneeling beside his body and taking his hand, even though I knew it no longer had any connection with the brain.

"I have felt that although you are made of flesh and blood, Miss Brown . . . and I am made of metal and plastic, we have something of kinship, for both of us do not fit . . . anywhere. We are more than machines . . . and less than people. Yet, since we are alike only by virtue of our . . . unlikeness, I am glad I am . . . finished. . . ."

"I'm sure you can be repaired!" I cried wildly.

He attempted to smile again. "Perhaps I could, but I would rather . . . not be. . . . Therefore, would you promise me, Miss Brown, that . . . if it lies in your power, you will . . . prevent my ever being repaired. . . . I have not found existence an experience I should care to repeat. . . ."

"I promise," I said dully, "If that's what you want."

"Now that the restrictive circuits which governed me . . . have been cut off, committing me no longer to Gregory's interests, I can tell you about his plans. I bear him and his people no love for having created me.

"For many of your years—

which are but months to them—they have watched your planet, which has an atmosphere like that of their own. They intend to conquer it; Gregory is commander of . . . the small task force considered sufficient for the purpose. After the conquest, he would be military governor. Since he is an extremely conscientious . . . executive, he wished to study his future subjects more closely . . . before the actual invasion abnormalized existing conditions. So Gregory from his reading of your books . . . hit upon his idea of pretending to be a child . . . and having a governess to instruct him. He enjoyed playing the child. In many ways, I think . . . he is one. I was built according to the . . . photographs they have of your kind, to play his father. But Gregory felt I was not quite right . . . as indeed I am not. I am built approximately in your form, think approximately in theirs, and consequently remain . . . a mere approximation. Therefore, Gregory, with military cunning . . . requested a governess with poor eyesight . . . and asocial tendencies. . . ."

The whirring came loud in his throat. "The attack is scheduled for tonight. It was set ahead, because of . . . your unfortunate glimpse of the scout car. The fleet is scheduled to land in Palisades Interstate Park . . . at midnight. Gregory's . . . people are not so far in advance of yours technologically that ordinary atomic power cannot destroy them . . . and it will be another thousand of your years . . . before the main fleet can arrive. Save your people if you can, and if you think them worth saving. . . . And remember . . . your promise. . . ."

There was a click in his throat . . . and then silence.

"A very touching little scene," Gregory observed from the landing above. "You've destroyed a very valuable piece of property there, young woman. He wasn't just an ordinary robot, but a unique experimental model."

He came all the way downstairs and prodded the remains of his pseudo-father with his boot. "Too bad," he murmured; "in a way, I suppose, I had grown attached to him—though I don't suppose a human being would be able to comprehend an emotion like that."

"I see you have made a very thorough study of human emotions," I said in a choked voice. Then I remembered the vital information with which I'd been charged, and I made a dash toward the door, but Gregory was too quick for me. I stood panting in his impersonal clasp. "I suppose you'll . . . destroy me now?"

"Nonsense!" he smiled. "Why should I punish you for attempting to do your duty? And very commendable of you, too. After I

have conquered your world, I shall need liaison agents, and I am accustomed to you, Miss Brown. It would be wasteful to have you killed unnecessarily."

He herded me upstairs to my room, and locked the door. Now I understand why the windows had bars. I heard his footsteps ascend to the attic, the loud roar of machinery, and then silence.

I looked at my watch. Five hours yet before the alien vessels would land, but of what good were those five hours if both door and windows remained obdurate to my efforts? Finally, after I had battered both my hands to bleeding pulps, I flung myself upon the bed, sobbing. I rumpled the counterpane. But I didn't care.

Then I remembered the blind man's "good luck" ring. Fantastic —but then so was this whole situation, so how could I adjudge one aspect as more bizarre than another? I twisted the stone three times. "Abracadabra," I said in a low, apologetic voice.

"Come in, abracadabra," said a tiny voice from the ring, the blind man's voice. "Been getting worried about you."

It was an effort for me to speak. "I'm locked up here alone in the house. Gregory has taken his scoutship to join the fleet. You knew all about this, I suppose. I fancy you would hardly have gone to such elaborate precautions merely to protect my virtue."

"We did suspect they were extrasolarians," he said, ignoring my last sentence, "when we saw the robot sneaking around at night stealing furniture. I had a suspicion that they were connected in some way with those ships, and so I prevailed upon the police not to close in on them, while I kept watch personally."

"They *are* connected with the extrasolarships," I said. "That thing in the attic was one. Gregory —little Gregory—" and I felt a kind of dull, remote wonder "—is their commander. And I spanked him."

"It is a memory to cherish," the voice from the ring replied reverently. And the robot? What happened to that? We're rather anxious to get hold of it."

"Mr. Huntington," I told him, "is dead."

He laughed—he actually *laughed*, as if I had said something very witty.

A quarter of an hour later, my door was being battered down and a stalwart figure leaped at me, tearing off his beard and dark glasses as he came. Behind them was the face made familiar by many a cereal box—the idol of the spaceways—Captain John Truesdell of the Space Patrol. I did not bother to take off my spectacles.

"Amelia, my darling," Captain John exclaimed, seizing me with arms that were muscle-strong, not

steel-strong, "can you ever forgive me for hurtling you into such great danger? But we nedeed to have a contact agent inside the house—"

"Sir," I said, pulling away, "we have never been properly introduced."

But he swept on, unheeding, "And, when Miss Frisbie notified us that the aliens had asked her to find a governess, we had her send you, since we *knew* that the daughter of Sebastian and Lavinia Hathaway-Brown would *want* to revenge herself on the murderers of her parents; it was unnecessary for us to have to *ask* her to volunteer."

Unnecessary and risky, I thought. And Gregory's people hadn't been murderers. They, too, had been taking pictures, and either they had blundered—or perhaps their photographic methods had a lethal effect on humans. If Gregory won, perhaps I ought to mention that fact to him. But why should I? People who liked to have their photographs taken, who were fond of their own petty, pretty persons, deserved to die.

However, I supposed it was my duty as a human being to try to prevent the invasion from being successful. And so I told Captain John what I knew.

"Thanks to you, Amelia," he declared, attempting to catch me in his fleshy arms again, "we have enough time to foil their plans. However, before I go, darling, I must tell you this. I used to worship your mother from afar—hopelessly, selflessly, relentlessly. When she was killed out there by those monsters, I thought I too would die. Instead, I dedicated myself to avenging her death. Then, on meeting you in my character of the blind man, I knew that I had another reason for living—for you are your mother all over again, Amelia . . . and I love you."

"I'm not a bit like her!" I snapped.

"In some lights—dim ones, particularly—you are. Of course you haven't her beauty, but, then, who could? It is her character you have, Amelia, her nobility of purpose, her true devotion to duty, her all-embracing spirit."

"My name, sir," I said, "is *Miss* Brown."

He pressed my cold, hard hand with his warm, soft one. "Foolish girl," he murmured; then leaped athletically down the stairs. He, too, was a great deal like my father, but he had consciously cut himself out of the same cardboard; Mr. Huntington had been cast in that form by his creators, who had used their pictures of my father as a prototype.

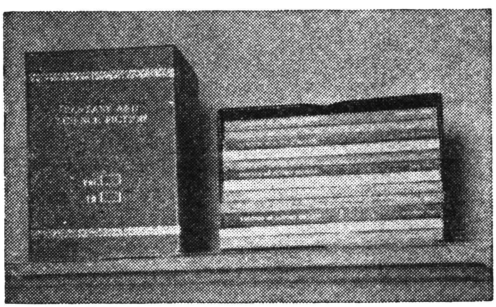
Slowly I followed Captain John down the stairs, step by step, feeling as if it were now I who weighed a ton. "Wait for me here, Amelia," he said. "I'll be back as

soon as I can." He paused to look upon Mr. Huntington's massive remains. "Watch this stuff for me, will you, dearest? Make sure nothing happens to it. We might be able to put the thing together again." He laughed. "If we get the secret of robotic power from the aliens, it'll more than pay back the cost of the bombs we use to destroy them."

"I'll . . . watch," I said. He kissed me upon my iron-cold lips. I went out on the porch with him and waved goodbye for as long as I could see him—and for some time afterward, mechanically, as if there were wires and coils and relays inside my body that impelled me to keep on making the meaningless gesture with my arm.

In the distance, I could hear the rattling wagon wheels of the antique dealer, and his hopeless cry, "Old rags, old bottles, old metal. Old rags, old bottles, old metal—"

As he approached, I leaned over the porch railings and beckoned. "Come in," I said. "I have . . . some old metal for you. . . ."



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BOOKS



A SENSE OF REALITY, Graham Greene, Viking, $3.50

Whether or not a writer is of the Roman Catholic persuasion has not perhaps been considered very largely important insofar as American writers are concerned; now that the administration of our first Roman Catholic president is beginning to draw to an end without "a chasuble set up in the public square or celibacy practiced in the open streets," it will probably be regarded as of even less importance. In England it is and has been otherwise. In this century, first Hillaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton, then Mr. (later Monsignor, later Bishop) Ronald Knox, and now Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene, have been regarded not so much writers or Roman Catholics as Roman Catholic writers. The former two, muffled in their cloaks and facial hair, went yo-ho-ho-ing and quaffing goodredwine and nutbrownale all the Hell over the place, missing no chance to regret the Reformation. The middle and pontifical gentleman was a quiet and humorous scholar, who careers in letters —I do trust such of my friends who are professing Papists will forgive my suggesting—would probably have been much the same if he had remained in the Church of England (and *pace* or *pacem* the gonads of Harry VIII). Not so the two latter . . . but as I cannot here devote the space I would like to Mr. Waugh, onto Mr. Greene. He it is who has perfected the technique of puffing his chosen Church by what I call praising with faint damns, and which Professor Theodore R. Cogswell has more felicitously called, in another context, praising with feigned damns. Now that I have led you (if I have) up the garden path, I must confess that of the four stories in this book only one is Roman Catholic in subject, and it is not SF. Only two of them are SF, and only one is much concerned with religion. Significantly, it is the better. The other is a post Doomsday story of no merit. What am I left with? One. *Under The Garden*. Rather good, rather reminiscent—in some of its social observation—of Waugh, though minus his deadful snobbery; rather reminiscent, too, in much of its

subterannean adventurings and philosophisings, of Ward Moore's *Transient*—and why will no one publish *it* in book form? Tsk. Perhaps SF is not the correct word for this curious account of a dying man who, trying to trace the possible factual element in a boyhood fantasy, in the end finds his Lord (may mine forgive me) in an old chamber-pot. A typical sardonic, cynical, wearily faithful, yellery-Greenery ending. Worth reading, but I wouldn't have given much for G.G.'s chances in 15th C. Toledo.

FIVE TALES FROM TOMORROW, **T. E. Dikty**, ed., Crest, 50¢

These stories were "selected from the book, THE BEST SCIENCE-FICTION STORIES AND NOVELS: 1955," and might perhaps have been better titled, Five Tales From Yesterday. The only one which stuck in my mind all these years was Robert Abernathy's *Axolotl* (gratuitously re-titled, *Deep Space*), which is alone worth the price of the book.

EROS AND EVIL, **R. E. L. Masters**, Julian Press, $8.50

The theme of this remarkable and horrifying book is expressed in its subtitle, "The Sexual Psychopathology of Witchcraft." The author has made good cases for his several accusations—such as that the present guilt-ridden and unsuccessful sexual attitude has its origins in neither early Judaism nor early Christianity, but in the witch-mania of the later middle ages; and that this mania "was in large part [to quote the blurb, which is a model for blurb-writers: take note, such] *a collective pornographic phantasy*." Italics mine. The prosecutors may have believed that they were waging war on theological error, but an almost incredibly large part of the "war" was taken up with lascivious descriptions of the alleged sexual relations between demons and humans. Masters continues the discussion of the possible part played by drugs—a discussion initiated by Margaret Murray [whose *Witch Cult in Western Europe* was reviewed here (Sept. 1963)] —in the witchcraft delusion, a delusion shared quite often by the prosecuted with the prosecutors; and applies present-day knowledge of the disease still inadequately called "hysteria." This is a fascinating and often frightening book. Interesting jacket design by Bruce Barton.

RADIO ASTRONOMY FOR AMATEURS, **Frank W. Hyde**, Norton, $5; and THE BIG DISH, **Roger Piper**, Harcourt, Brace & World, $3.25

I've had several requests for reviews of books dealing with the increasingly-important science of radio astronomy, so here are two of them. Both are British—both copiously illustrated—the Piper one, which is largely but not exclusively

concerned with the famous mammoth instrument which Sir Bernard Lovell set up at Jodrell Bank, is in simpler language (and larger print). I don't know if optical, or lens-telescope, astronomy is on the way out or not; but radio, or electronic, astronomy is certainly on the way in—no: it's already in. And if you are one of those marvelous people who can and do build their own equipment to become solitary or social watchers of the sky, Director Hyde will show you How To Do It. Myself, I regard changing light bulbs as an arcane and dangerous art, and all this hearkening to the whispers from Far Arcturus leaves me awed and silent.

INTELLIGENT LIFE IN SPACE, **Frank B. Drake,** Macmillan, $3.50

This should perhaps be included with the Piper and Hyde books, for Dr. Drake is the head man on Project Ozma, which has the National Radio Astronomy Observatory (and not a few outsiders, too) straining its collective ear to pick up radio signals—if any—from outer space. If any similar work is being engaged in by the denizens of another solar system they may by now be just getting a campaign speech by President Harding, or perhaps the Tasty Yeast Jesters—and are quietly shelving their own project. However, Dr. Drake takes on other subjects, including the one mentioned in the title, such as stellar and social evolution, and what it takes to be civilized and communicate. The print is big, the language is very simple. Illustrations.

THE SECRETS OF DR. TAVERNER, **Dion Fortune,** Llewelyn, $4.95

There are probably readers who would like the very old-fashioned Occult Investigator stories in this collection; though maybe not many. Those who remember Seabury Quinn's Jules de Grandin tales in the old *Weird Tales* will recognize the type; Ron Goulart has probably killed off forever any more for-serious use of the format, through his semi-parodies in this Magazine. These here are intended, says the publisher, *"as a serious study in the psychology of ultra-consciousness"* . . . the woman who wrote as "Dion Fortune" is said to have been a pioneer in psychoanalytical study, and turns up quoted in EROS AND EVIL as an authority on occult mysticism. There is a beautiful cover by Hannes Bok.

A SURVEY OF THE MOON, **Patrick Moore,** Norton, $6.95

Another in The Amateur Astronomer's Library series, and, like the others, of interest to non-astronomers as well. I have reviewed a few of Mr. Moore's books before; this, like those, is serious, competent, comprehensible. When all is said and done we do not

know a Hell of a lot about the Moon, but this is a survey of what was known at the time of writing —about two years ago, I'd guess. And there is also a detailed map.

SECONDS, David Ely, Pantheon (Random House), $3.95

Here is a clever, clever novel by a writer new to me—a Fulbright scholar and former newspaperman —his second novel. People are always grousing about what they would do if they had it all to do over . . . if they only had another chance . . . a second chance . . . Mr. Ely's man (his name isn't important) gets that chance. There is, believe it or not, a giant and secret corporation helping the unhappy upper middle-class, upper middle aged man who is tired of living his life of quiet desparation. For a fee—a large one, naturally—a body surgically arranged to be identical with his will be "discovered" dead; he, meanwhile, surgically arranged, though quite alive, to look quite unlike his former self, is provided with a new background, a new home, new friends . . . in short, with that self-same Second Chance. What happens next? And next? And, finally, next? The events of the book are bitter, wry, beautifully logical, logically simple, simply dreadful. Keep your eye on Mr. Ely—he's a comer. And, meanwhile, make the most of what you have.

MAN ON EARTH, S. P. R. Carter, Contact Editions, $4.95

Philosophy, ecology, politics, mingle in this book of eighteen addresses delivered by the author on the radio stations of the non-profit Pacifica Foundation; foreword is by Aldous Huxley, and by way of brief review let me quote him. "We do not know if the Earth will be able to support its population another 196 years; if we are capable of increasing our rate of replacement of natural resources to keep pace with consumption; what will be the effect on mankind of our increasingly altered milk; the effect of population pressures, water limitations, the morality of our times, scientific humanism and realism. We do not know the interrelationship of science and the arts of man. [. . .] For men as members of our planet's dominant and most destructive species; human ecology is by far the most important of the sciences. It is also, ironically, the least developed of the sciences, the most nearly non-existent." Charter's intention is to look beyond politics and to evolve a "design-theory" to help solve the problem of "man and his constantly altering society." His concern is obvious; so is the problem.

WHO FEARS THE DEVIL, Manly Wade Wellman, Arkham House, $4.00

As the author says, "Except for a few of the shorter sketches, all

these stories appeared in somewhat different form in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* over a period of nearly a dozen years." Custom, therefore, precludes their review, but who is there who does not know Mr. Wellman's use of Appalachian Mountain folk-motifs in his stories of John, the minstrel-man?

MAN AND THE SUN, **Jacquetta Hawkes**, Random House, $5.00

This book is about man's past, present, and future relationship with what must for at least a long time continue to be his most important heavenly body, ranging from Stonehenge (and before) down to That which is brighter than a thousand suns. Mrs. J. B. Priestly is said to have acquired for the composition of the book "a more than superficial knowledge of paleontology, astronomy, archaeology, geology, anthropology, theology, physics and philosophy." Specialists in these fields may have, I fear, their doubts. The book seems constantly about to be more interesting than it actually ever is. Muriel Nasser's jacket design is gaudy.

THE WORLD OF FLYING SAUCERS, **Donald H. Menzel & Lyle G. Boyd**, Doubleday, $4.50

Subtitled, revealingly, "A Scientific Examination of a Major Myth of The Space Age," this collaboration between the Director of the Harvard College Observatory and the lady science writer who is half of the SF author "Boyd Ellanby" carefully examines all the material on UFOs (unidentified flying objects) in the US Air Force Files—and, to the major question involved, returns not unexpectedly a calm negative. While explanations (such as balloons, meteors, radar ghosts, recognized types of optical illusions, etc.) seem to exist for most reported phenomena even those which remain unexplained offer no faint trace of acceptable evidence that vehicles from Elsewhere have visited our little old Earth. I don't know if I should be glad or sorry.

—AVRAM DAVIDSON

ESSAYS ON A SCIENCE OF MYTHOLOGY, **C. G. Jung and C. Kerényi**, trans. R.F.C. Hull, Harper Torchbooks, $1.85

Two essays by a specialist in Greek religion, each with an elaboration by Jung, attempting a depth study of two specially important archetypes: the Divine Child (usually a boy suddenly displaying superhuman powers after abandonment and other vicissitudes, often later revealed as androgynous) and the Great Mother Goddess as nubile girl, matron, and hag. Kerényi's method is comparative thematic analysis of motifs from mythology of Greco-Roman, European, Indian and Asiatic sources; Jung finds the same

motifs in his patients' dreams and fantasies.

It was from this same identification of motifs common to world mythologies and dream symbolism that Jung devised his theory of archetypes. Archetypes are defined as just such timeless, recurrent motifs, appearing in human roles or natural events, in waking life, dreams or myths; characteristically looming greater than lifesize, they evoke feelings ranging from horror to awe. In earlier times, when people thought in less positivistic terms than are now popular, archetypes became material for superstitions and myths. But even today it is hard to be indifferent to them: the "Earth Mother" type of woman, the sorcerer, the Wise Old Man, the hetaira or femme fatale, the child with extraordinary abilities,—all have their own fascination, their unpredictability, their power to evoke beholders' reactions simply by showing up. Small wonder, then, that they have found their way into science-fiction and fantasy literature. Heinlein's archetypal Wise Old Man, alias Jubal Harshaw, alias Lazarus Long, recurs in dozens of stories. Jack Vance's sorcerers have the authentic flavor. Tolkien's Gandalf is partly sorcerer, partly Wise Old Man. The line of avatars of the Child God stretches unbroken from Krishna, Hermes and Dionysos through the Christ Child to Bradbury's Small Assassin, Stapledon's Odd John (and other young superbrains) and the androgynous Child worshiped by the Ledom in Sturgeon's *Venus Plus X*. Similarly, the Mother Goddess, familiar from most prechristian religions, reappears in Sufiism, troubadour songs and romantic poetry, and lately in such unlikely places as Rider Haggard's fantasies, Jerome Hill's film *The Sand Castle*, and several Philip Jose Farmer stories. And the *I Ching* or *Book of Changes*, the real hero of Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (see review in the June 1963 F&SF), has been identified as the oracles of Kwan Yin, the Chinese name for this same Mother Goddess. It follows that a greater familiarity with the archetypes may increase one's enjoyment and understanding of science-fiction, fantasy and poetry alike. Jung even goes so far as to maintain that archetypes are necessary elements of our psyche, and that neglect of such understanding can lead to neurosis.

Nevertheless, this book does not contribute too much to laymen's understanding of how knowing the archetypes can help one know human nature. (The book that can fill this need probably hasn't been written.) Rather, it is an esoteric study aimed at specialists; and even as such it is unsuccessful, failing to take into account Robert Graves's researches, which answer questions Kerényi left dark. (How-

ever, if read in connection with the Graves books and Erich Neumann's *The Great Mother,* this book may provide some additional illumination.) Still worse, Kerényi's essays come out through the translation process in a thorny Teutonic scholarese calculated to drive away all casual readers and many devoted ones.

—WALTER BREEN



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Our Mr. Pettifogle having been beset in the Antipodes by a woomerah or a coolibah—or perhaps it was a sheila or a bandicoot—we can tell you about Mr. Kit Denton only that he lives in Cremorne in the State of New South Wales, is both humble and ambitious, and respects the craft of writing more than somewhat. It has been seriously claimed by serious students of the subject that children are not altogether human and in consequence have (sometimes, at least) not altogether human habits . . . attitudes . . . and, it may be, gifts—remnants, perhaps, of the very childhood of the human race itself . . .

BURNING SPEAR

by Kit Denton

"I DON'T THINK YOU COULD CALL him a fanciful boy," she said.

"Imaginative, yes, but not fanciful. And then he comes up with this weird idea."

"The business of picking up sunlight?" He was only slightly interested, the interest of a not-too-close brother. "I don't know . . . kids do get ideas in their heads, don't they? And I suppose the more you tell them they're silly or wrong or mad, the more likely they are to hang on to them."

She made an odd grimace. "Oh, it's not that I think there's anything wrong . . . I've told him a hundred times I don't mind his making up *stories,* and long as he realizes that's all they are. But I won't take lies, and he's handing them out wholesale. And then, he gets so wound up and intense over things, and he won't let go. Last year it was model ships! Did I tell you I found him working on one of them at three o'clock one morning? And the only word he'd give me was that it was necessary for him to finish the job! Necessary! For a twelve-year-old boy? As though there was nothing else of importance in the world."

"Perhaps there *was* nothing else of importance," his tone was less casual, more abrupt. "After all, he doesn't see much of you, does he?"

The colour crept up her face and drained back again, a spring tide of anger. "Look, don't throw that up at me again. The fact that I spend my days working has noth-

ing to do with you, and the boy's not alone . . . he's at school during the day, and I'm with him in the evenings. He's not lonely."

Upstairs, Tim sat on the edge of his bed, elbows on knees, wrists slack, hands swinging. He was lonely.

The brother, the uncle, snorted. "You don't have to work, you've enough money and to spare. You don't have to be away from the house. If you want my opinion, I think the kid's starved for a bit of old-fashioned mollycoddling, a bit of love. But of course you don't want my opinion. You only got me here to listen to yours."

Now her anger was open, dull-red and spiked. She knew he was right, of course, but she was damned if she was going to admit it! "Perhaps you think you could do better? You haven't got a grain of imagery in your thick head, and you'd never come within worlds of really understanding a boy like Tim . . . he's a dreamer, sensitive. But he has to have a man's hand every now and then. I'd thought perhaps you were the one to speak to him, but I can see I was terribly wrong. I'm sorry I even thought of asking."

His hand slid through an accustomed weary movement, cancelling what she had said, refusing what she had implied, denying the need for further talk. "All right," he said, "all right . . . if you're going to hit that old trail again, I give in. I surrender. I'll talk to him."

The noise of the footsteps walked up the stairs ahead of the man and Tim moved from the bed to the table under the window, so that when the door opened his hands were busy about the balsa wood of a small-scale aircraft and his dark head was bent. The afternoon sun fell slantwise across his face . . . snub nose, brown eye, mouth compressed and the tip of his tongue edging from his lips as he concentrated on the sliver of wood in his fingers. Only when the neat cut was done did he look up, brown eyes, wide-set and deep.

"Hallo uncle." That was all. The mouth shut as the open eyes were shut on the inside.

"Hi, Tim. Your own design?"

"Uhuh." Nothing. No conversation, no lead, no spark.

"Will it fly?"

"I expect so." Flat statement.

"Even without wings, Tim?" He was interested in spite of himself. "It's a bit unusual, isn't it?"

"We-e-ell . . . " the boy eased the word out ". . . well, maybe I only think it'll fly. Maybe it won't do anything but look good."

The uncle stood a moment longer, then folded himself onto the bed. "Tim, what's this stuff about picking up sunlight? Your mother's worried . . . she says it's coming an—an obsession with you, that you refuse to give up the story."

"It's not a story!" The boy's face had darkened. "It's the truth, but she won't believe me because she doesn't understand! Nobody does, except me!" He stopped sharply, afraid that the sob would leap out of his throat and quiver in his mouth. He swallowed and went on, "I told her because I thought she'd be glad to know, because I was glad and I wanted her to be pleased with me. I thought it was pretty terrific, but all she would say was 'Yes, dear' and then 'You must stop making up these strange stories, dear." She doesn't understand. Nobody does, except me."

In the still room the last words bounced off the walls, off the furniture, the ceiling, the walls, dismal and alone. Nobody . . . except me.

The man felt cold; no child should be this sad, this grownup lonely. His voice was quiet. "Look, Tim . . . would it help if you wrote it all down and made a real story out of it . . . something that we could sell perhaps and have published in a magazine? I'd help."

Tim looked at him and through him and all round the inside of him, and he was glad that he'd meant what he'd said. But then, "No, uncle. You see, people would think it was just something I'd made up, and it's not. It's true."

Lighting a cigarette gave the uncle time to choke back the impatience, the irritation. A long draw, and then, the voice controlled, "Tim, I'm not doubting you, but you don't give a fellow much to go on, do you? You dash in on a quiet Sunday morning and tell your mother you've picked up a piece of sunlight and expect her to believe it—just like that! Look, no-one picks up pieces of sunlight . . . or at least, not little boys. I daresay scientists can do something like it, somehow, but you're no scientist, are you? And you won't let your mother see whatever it was you picked up, and you insist on going on with the story. Don't you see that it doesn't add up? Either you're inventing it all, or you're being pretty silly . . . and if you're not, then you've got to give proof. You can't just do nothing but be unhappy, and make other people unhappy, too." It was off his chest; he felt relieved.

Tim sat back in his chair. The outside of him was there and was listening and thinking, but the inside of him was away on a Sunday morning, three weeks ago. In bed. He knew it was just about six o'clock although he hadn't a watch or a bedside clock. He just knew, in the same way he'd have known it was Sunday, even without a calendar or the knowledge of the day before. Sunday had a special feel, and six o'clock on Sunday morning had a feel and a taste, like honey and toast and dark chocolate. And a smell . . . iron-water and leaves. It was autumn, and that

made it feel and taste and smell better, and the long spokes of morning sun turned in at his window and wheeled and angled across the room, bending cleverly up the face of the wardrobe, and neatly folding down the side of the chair. And on such a morning, you just got up—sat up and swung and stood and you were at once part of the morning which touched all your world and all the things in it, right to the edge of someone else's nighttime. Jeans and a sweater and soft shoes. Downstairs to the kitchen and the crisp noise of the frig door snicking open. Milk was white and cold and sweet, and better than a shower for waking you up, and it was thick enough to stay in your mouth for whole Autumn minutes. And outside, outside, enough breeze to make all the grass and flowers grow sideways. Enough birds to fill just one corner of your head with chirps and whistles. Enough dew to sparkle, not enough to soak. Enough crisp, singing air to slice up your nostrils and down the back of your throat and into your lungs and belly and feet and make you broaden and widen and get taller and *leap!* And sunlight . . . a great broad plate-glass sheet of it lying on the lawn, and two planks of it leaning up against the side of the house. A cataract of sunlight pouring over the roof and sluicing down the wall, and an empty box of it in the corner between the house and the garage. And all along the path, where the picket fence stood, a catwalk of sunlight, slats of it like a ladder lying down. His feet led him, one-toe, two-toe, along the rungs to the end, jump and spin and back again, and there, where the end of the fence joined the side of the garage, a different sort of space had let through a different sort of sunlight.

A spear of it.

A long shaft with a slim leaf of a blade at its head, lying aslant the path like a great compass needle.

One foot in the air he stopped and looked and admired. He let his foot down slowly so as not to shake the ground, and stepped high and careful round the brilliant spear, toeing the path near the golden blade. And then he bent down and picked it up.

The uncle was saying, "Either you're inventing it all or you're just being silly . . . ," and Tim's outside was listening, but his inside was holding the spear of sunlight that he'd lifted from the ground, holding it out level with his face. An Autumn Sunday morning, and he, Tim, had picked up a piece of sunlight made like a splendid spear, the sort of spear Ulysses might have carried, or Hercules or Richard the Lion-Hearted. He felt it in his hands, cold steel sunlight, prickling with heat; he felt his shoulders widen and his chest deepen, and felt the broad leather belt studded with

bronze about his waist. He knew his legs were lengthening and knew that packs and knots of muscle were moving on his arms and body, and he felt his eyes go golden as he looked. Striding tall and brown and muscled, he took the spear at the point of balance and went into the house, the hall a box of radiance and the stairway blazing about him. First to his bedroom, the walls coruscating, the ceiling a sky of light, the floor a pool of molten gold. And then to his mother, emptyhanded now, but with the strength of the sunlight upon him. To his mother . . .

Time realised that his uncle had stopped speaking. He had decided nothing, but he knew what had to be done. Proof, they wanted proof.

"All right, uncle," he said.

"Good boy, Tim! You'll cut it out, then? There's really no need to go on with it, is there, and your mother will be very relieved."

His eyes swung with the boy's body as it moved to the closet in the corner of the room.

Tim stopped, his hand on the door. He hadn't looked in this narrow cupboard since that Sunday morning. He'd lived with the thought in him that perhaps he'd dreamed it or imagined it, but he couldn't yield the dream, the image. The tears were stinging the corner of his mouth, and a hard-edged sob jerked from his throat as he swung back the closet door.

The uncle saw, briefly, the comet colours in the closet, saw, for one instant, the brilliance and the fire, saw, for a fraction of time, the great burning spear of sunlight. And the last thing he saw before the blaze curtained his eyes with blackness was The Boy reaching in to take out the spear and hold it lovingly in his hands.

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What could be more simple and wholesome than a laundry—eh? Doubts on this point have been creeping in from here and there for some time, though; and Laurence M. Janifer (who used to be Larry M. Harris, among other things), author of SLAVE PLANET (Pyramid), sets us right on at least one aspect of the public linen-washing business. Anyone for disposable clothes?

IN THE BAG

by Laurence M. Janifer

So I WENT BACK TO THE LAUNdry, and I said, keeping my temper nicely: "You gave me the wrong bundle."

And, of course, when the guy behind the cash register looked at the bundle I gave him he turned pale. Just like I thought he would. He looked up at me. "I'm sorry," he said. "It was an accident." He gave me an apologetic, scared smile.

"Sure it was," I said. "A real accident. I took a look inside the laundry bag."

The smile disappeared. He was an oldish character, in his fifties, with steel-rimmed glasses. You wouldn't expect a guy like that to look grim and determined. "You did?" he asked me.

"I saw the sweater," I said. "That was the first thing."

"Oh," he said. "The sweater."

"Uh-huh," I said. I paused. "*Five* arms?"

"Well—" He shrugged. "A joke. A tailor's mistake."

"Sure," I said. "And maybe I was mistaken, right? But I wasn't mistaken. A sweater with five arms. A brassiere—with three cups, all about 56-D. Pajamas cut like balloons, with only one leg."

"Deformed," the tailor said in a hurry. "Circus people. Freaks. It's terrible."

I shook my head. "There are no freaks like that in the world," I said.

He waited for a second, but I didn't go away. Neither did the bundle.

Then, at last, he sighed. "All right," he said. "You've asked for it. There is a planet called Almar."

"A planet?" I asked.

"It's part of a system so far away your telescopes haven't reached it yet," he said. "Almar is ruled by an autocrat. The people are—well, slaves." He nodded. "That's right, slaves."

"Okay," I said. "Go on with the science fiction."

"The men on Almar look superficially like human beings," he said. "It's the women who are—different."

I nodded. "I'll say."

"A few months ago, a small group, men and women both, left the planet secretly. A form of spatial translation—you wouldn't understand."

"I don't even understand Continental Classroom," I said.

"There," he said, as if I'd proven something. "Now, this group is preparing a revolution against the tyrant. Here, far away, we can hide and make our plans. Then, when we're ready, we can go back, overthrow the autocrat and set up a democracy."

I let a second go by. "This is a hell of a story," I said.

"But we've got to be very careful," he said. He reached under the counter. "You see, the autocrat's spies are everywhere on Almar. We can't afford to let word leak out, even here."

"Sure," I said. "I can see that—must be rough." I watched his hand. I wasn't really surprised when it came up with a funny-looking little gun in it.

"So, we've got to kill you," he said in a nice, firm, reasonable voice. "But you will know, at least, that you are dying for the cause of freedom for a whole people."

"That's nice," I said.

"I wish there were some other way," he said.

"Well," I said, "there is, you know."

I didn't bother with a full draw-and-sight, but I got him nicely from the hip. The autocrat trains his guards well, naturally—not like these amateurs.

After he was disintegrated, I went around behind the counter and ran the laundry for a while. Sooner or later the others would show up, and I figured I might just as well be doing something constructive in the meanwhile.



Wilson Tucker is not really Old; in fact, he is in the prime of life. Like so many people in that curious and singular microcosm called Science Fiction Fandom—or, simply, Fandom—he just got an early start. Some separation of the powers is evident, since Tucker, as Pro, writes as Wilson *Tucker; and, as Fan, as* Bob *Tucker. Wilson Tucker has written for F&SF such well-remembered stories as ABLE TO ZEBRA (March 1953) and TO THE TOMBAUGH STATION (July 1960); he is also the author of several novels, including THE LINCOLN HUNTERS. To describe the activities of Bob Tucker is less easy. He has joyfully participated in every conceivable (and some almost inconceivable) activity related to the appreciation of Science Fiction* and *—and perhaps this is the kernel in the nut—the appreciation of those who also appreciate it. The humor of Jolly Good Fellow T. has enlivened the podium (and bars) of many SF conventions and of SF fanzines innumerable. It is slightly confusing that the Tucker who now writes about Fans is* Wilson *and not* Bob, *but the distinction perhaps sometimes goes in one head and out the other. Here, at any rate, is the first of three articles concerned with the current SF fan scene. In previous years such surveys were conducted by Robert Bloch who, though now busy in Hollywood, has nevertheless contributed the second of this current series. The third, along presently, is by Terry Carr. Other fields of literature have Readers . . . so does ours . . . but none other really has Fans. Want to know why? Want to know more? Read on . . . but You May Never Be The Same.*

THE FAN: MYTH AND REALITY

by Wilson Tucker

BEFORE THE APPEARANCE OF Man on this planet there was prehistoric man, a creature not quite a man but not quite an ape, either. Before the appearance of the present day science fiction fan, there was *Eofan*—and the same comment applies.

Unfortunately, *Eofan's* precise beginnings are lost in the mists of time, in the rosy dawn of civilization, and other convenient cliches. External evidence indicates he did exist—but when? Some scholars hold that the first fan lived about 350 B.C. and picture him as a callow youth who dogged Plato's footsteps, demanding more details of the story of lost Atlantis. Other learned men denounce this (and the legend) as pure fantasy, insisting that the first true fan walked the earth circa 165 A.D. They claim him to be a thoughtful fellow of indeterminate age who had read the interplanetary tales created by Lucian of Somasata; a fellow who bugged the author by picking technical flaws in his orbital programming.

A few crumbling clay tablets unearthed in the lower levels of New York provide more scientifically acceptable clues. Science fiction fandom was spawned by latter day mass-circulated magazines, rather than the earlier books.

Strange fiction which as yet had no name began to appear, in periodical format, during the Nineteenth Century. At least one story, entitled "The Steam Man of the Plains" and detailing the wild and woolly adventures of a robot, was found in a dime weekly which ordinarily devoted its pages to cowboys and Indians. In higher strata, off trail fiction was published by the likes of *Harper's* and *The Atlantic Monthly*. A magazine devoted almost entirely to the fantastic was *Thrill Book,* appearing in 1919. Hugo Gernsback, a publisher of practical science and technical magazines, consistently offered scientific stories in his periodicals and finally coined the term, *scientifiction*. There are some who have never forgiven him.

Radio was the dawning marvel of that age and large numbers of stories were built around the marvel: "The Great Radio Message from Mars." Victor MacClure, later to become quite well known for his interplanetary epics, in 1924 created a record of sorts by publishing "The Ark of The Covenant," a serial which ran on and on for fifteen monthly installments. Neolithic fan read it.

A recognizable form of science fiction fandom had its definite beginnings during the years 1923 through 1929, when the first four successful magazines catering to the tribe went on sale: *Weird Tales* in March 1923, *Amazing Stories* in April 1926, *Science Wonder Stories* in June 1929, and *Air Wonder Stories* in July 1929. The editors of those prelusory magazines, either because they were geniuses or were grasping at straws, reasoned that there were living people on the other side of the newsstands who would read, and just possibly write. They suspected the presence of neolithic fan. To test this theory they invit-

ed their readers to send letters—and were inundated. To this day, hapless editors have not been able to stop the flow of garrulous letters, and they may be cursing their predecessors who opened the flood gates. Neolithic fan, a silent and shadowy creature who had existed only by circumstantial evidence, moved into recorded history and started to climb the tree.

Editors printed many of the letters received and hinted at hundreds of others, "crowded out by lack of space." They are the culprits responsible for fandom.

In less time than it takes to say Hugo Gernsback backward, the readers were also writing to each other, comparing notes on the stories, the science (or lack of it), the authors, and quite probably the characters who edited the magazines. They started collecting books and magazines with the feverish intensity of a stamp or coin collector. This led to correspondence clubs, and then social and science clubs, and inevitably a club bulletin was published on someone's mimeograph. In New York City, the commonly accepted birthplace of fandom, club meetings permitted individuals to face each other for the first time and talk about something other than girls. Before these innocents knew what was happening, fandom developed like Dr. Frankenstein's monster.

And it is.

The very concept of science fiction fandom spread with appalling rapidity. Fans and fan clubs sprang up in every big and little city across the nation containing a newsstand; in those wastelands lacking a newsstand, copies of magazines were smuggled through the mails to unsuspecting youths and senile senior citizens. Garages were filled to overflowing with accumulated magazines while automobiles were left on the street. Closets were packed with science fiction and clothing was tossed under the bed. Oldsters gave up drink to buy *Astounding Stories.*

This fandom betrayed all the classic features of a universal craze (and some say a disease). Not content with exchanging letters and bugging editors, not content with cranking out their own club bulletins, educational journals and newspapers, these people took to visiting one another—to holding joint meetings, regional conclaves, and then annual conventions in strange sounding places like Bellefontaine, Ohio, and South Gate, Calif. The craze jumped oceans; fans have popped out of the woodwork in some thirty countries around the world.

Clearly, it was too late for the authorities to stamp out the iniquitous growth.

The population of fandom has never been adequately determined; certainly it is not the airy figure of

two million quoted by a national news magazine—they may have been thinking of bee keepers, or something. A better guide (but only a guide) are the audited circulation figures of last year's science fiction magazines, figures which ranged between fifty and ninety thousand copies. Deduct from that the number of people you suspect of having two heads, and your estimate will be as sound as the next man's.

One of the stranger things about fandom is the manner in which it cannibalizes itself.

And for a sinister purpose: self-perpetuation.

By guile and cunning, by crafty plotting worthy of a CIA agent, those fans of yesteryear have taken over the science fiction industry. The young upstarts who wrote the letters and formed the clubs and worshipped the elder gods of the Nineteen Thirties finally turned on their masters; *turn the rascals out!* was their battlecry. Out went the rascals, in went the fans—who proclaimed that *now* science fiction would be better than ever. A few of them were right.

Donald Wollheim, a prime mover in New York circles thirty years ago, currently edits Ace Books and sometimes issues as many as a half dozen science fiction titles a month. Fred Pohl, another thirty year veteran, is editing two or three magazines—among them, one which claims the largest science fiction circulation in the world. Frank Robinson, who discovered fandom in 1939, acquired a healthy reputation as a short story writer and moved on to the editor's chair at *Rogue*. Going him one better was William Hamling, a fan of the same period, who founded a publishing house: *Rogue* and Regency Books are his assets. (And the editor of *this* magazine, a surly fellow who haunts conventions badgering innocent authors, has a fannish background he wisely refuses to discuss. Contrary to popular rumor, however, it does not involve his picture hanging on a postoffice wall.)

The industry has been thoroughly subverted. In all, perhaps thirty or so of the creatures have taken to editing books and magazines; another two or three hundred of them are writing the yarns to fill all these pages; and about a dozen have launched their own publishing ventures. (There are also a handful of fans toiling in H——wood, mutilating movie and TV scripts, but these people are not invited into decent homes and care is taken to not mention their names in mixed company.) And as might be suspected, those in the saddle are continually plotting to spread the subversion—they like to say they are seeking new recruits to the banner of science fiction. The recruits, of course, are plotting to overthrow

them and seize their kingdoms. This hasn't changed since 1929.

What is a fan?

A fan is anyone, male or female, who can read these lines without using pencil or finger, and who seems faintly interested in the rocket ships described in the surrounding pages. (The first qualification may be omitted if there is a genuine interest in the rockets.) A fan is anyone who is moved to argue with E. E. Smith, after reading his most recent serial; a fan is anyone who is willing to accept the word of van Vogt there are rain forests on Venus; a fan is anyone who would *not* be amazed if a ball was tossed into the air—and stayed there.

That last definition was offered by a neolithic character named Forrest Ackerman, who should know; he was one of that breed which made life miserable for editors as early as 1929. (Oh, yes—he is also editing a magazine now and the little monsters are bugging *him.*) But other than these professionals there are the untold hundreds of thousands of non-professionals (fans, in the dictionary sense) who make up the shuffling, noisy bulk of fandom. And they are noisy. They are the people who still write the letters, publish the club bulletins and other journals, applaud or criticize the authors, and attend the conventions well equipped with bags of water and ballbearing door openers.

A fan is the rare person who does not get wildly excited (well, hardly ever) when an astronaut orbits the earth ten or twenty times; the one person who is amused and sometimes annoyed at the breathless reports spewed over the airwaves by broadcasters who don't know the difference between gee and perigee. Orbiting is old stuff; free fall has been a way of life for nearly forty years. A fan is the smug fellow who knew what John Glenn's "fireflies" were, while government brains were busy denying their existence.

In age, they literally span the years between eight and eighty. This observor has known both extremes.

A survey (yes, one of those ubiquitous surveys) exploring the backgrounds and occupations of fans turned up the entirely expected information that they represent every economic strata from top to bottom; again, this observor is acquainted with a near-millionaire and a near-pauper, and each in his fashion baits editors, attend conventions, and collect star-begotten literature like fiends. Of course, the occupational lists are endless.

There are astronomers, chemists, electricians, actors, machinists, librarians, doctors, all manner of engineers, teachers, students, housewives, cab drivers, rate clerks, military personnel, physicists, newpapers and adver-

tising types, city officials (including one named Elmer), a cobbler, a lady wrestler, movie projectionists, technicians, salesmen, farmers, railroad men, policemen, the unemployed and the retired. In addition, there are a couple of lawyers who managed to worm their way into their state legislatures, a H——wood producer, and a chap who was on the computer end of some recent space shots.

Including this year, there have been twenty-one international conventions, with as many as a thousand in attendance. Robert Bloch's upcoming report covers this facet of fandom. The largest fan organization, numerically speaking, is The National Fantasy Fan Federation; it was organized twenty-three years ago and its first president was L. R. Chauvenet—who is still knocking around the boondocks. The oldest institution still in existence is the Fantasy Amateur Press Association (the club with the built-in waiting list) which was organized in 1937 by Donald Wollheim—yes, that same Donald Wollheim who. He will own the works pretty soon.

This, then, is science fiction fandom. And when the first time machine is perfected, one of the initial tasks will be to journey back to 165 A.D. and to 359 B.C., to strangle those first two *eofans* in their cradles. Fandom will cease to be a way of life.

Don't miss

ROBERT BLOCH's

amusing report on

THE CONVENTIONAL

APPROACH

to SF Fandom.

In next month's issue.



Ever since the appearance of AUNT AGATHA, (F&SF, Oct. 1952), Doris Pitkin Buck has graced our pages with her poetry, the most recent gift of verse being THE RESPONDENTS, (F&SF, July 1963). She thus joins—we cannot say, the ranks: *such an implication of regimentation will not apply—the small group of those who have written for us both prose and poetry—Randall Garrett, Theodore Cogswell, Karen Anderson, Brian Aldiss, P. M. Hubbard, and Isaac Asimov. Gently pressed for information about herself, Mrs. Richard Buck gently replied, "My life has been genteelly uneventful but rather fun to live: AB, MA, quite a little teaching, acting in summer theatres, movies, free lance writing—as much as I could manage. My dream job was doing publicity in a museum. Everything about it was fabulous—paintings on my way to work, books and objects all old and rare. Almost equally delightful was getting all dolled up and eating shrimp in front of a camera for the Department of the Interior. For some reason they pay you. My husband and I live in Washington, D.C. Occasionally he illustrates articles I write. I don't know whether or not I could do* science *fiction without his help." Mrs. Buck's story is set a bare two generations into an over-populated future. There are those who distrust and distaste life, however, whether it be abundant or sparse. Katherine, it seems, was one of them.*

COME WHERE MY LOVE LIES DREAMING

by Doris Pitkin Buck

KATHERINE FROWNED AT THE official letterpaper with an official-looking map of maria and ringwalls at the top. It was what she had been waiting for from the National Park Service, Moon Division, in downtown Washington since last April or since—as their reply put it—4/4/2062. Her eye had already caught key

phrases ". . . on account of the popularity of Tycho Ringwall National Park . . . regrets to inform you. . . ."

Of course they wouldn't mention the world's #1 problem, population explosion, any more than she herself would use a term that people around her in Georgetown considered dirty. Georgetowners, and all of Washington, D.C. for that matten spoke with a smile of *high-positive vital statistics*. They added chattily that for every human problem the Human Mind could find a solution.

Katherine admitted to herself that the Human Mind could come up with amazing solutions, but whether you liked them or not was something else again. Oh, she wanted so to go to the Moon! The lifeless Moon had never known the meaning of a problem.

She skimmed the letter. "If you wish an entry permit for yourself and your family in . . ." How long would they put her off? She went back to ". . . yourself and your family in 2065, apply for Form 9976/AJc if adults and children wishing to visit the Park do not exceed five (5)."

With tense fingers she tore up the letter, thinking as she did so that Earth's over-population was not really due to fecundity. Even India and China had eliminated infant mortality, unless some new menace developed to take off the children. It all added up to that inexorable *plus* of teeming life which was so dismaying. Her shoulders did something between a shrug and a shudder. Privately she thought of civilization as a dress on a woman gaining weight; the fabric could not help giving way at the seams.

Look for instance at this matter of the national parks. As she had told her friend Madge, you couldn't just go to one. You had to hunt for some place where the quota wasn't filled. If the quota wasn't filled, probably nobody wanted to go there for the same reasons that you didn't.

Katherine wrinkled her pretty nose in disgust. That was how the Park Service kept areas from being trampled into shabbiness. Of course the Government was always creating new national parks, like the time they made Massachusetts into one. But the more parks, the more tourists. Even with nearly 1000 undersea miles of continental shelf in the Atlantic opened last summer, things were crowded. Some day she supposed there would be Venusian national parks—and much that would help.

The entrance chime sounded, grating on her mood more than something out of tune. Simultaneously a prettily framed viewer showed her friend Madge on Katherine's picturesquely archaic front stoop. Oh the unmitigated

neighborliness of everybody these days!

Before Madge came hurrying in, obviously loving both life and the adventures it brought, Katherine let herself think for one moment: *On the Moon, they have never found a fossil. The peaks rise jagged into an airless sky. The seas have never teemed with fish in shoals.*

Then Madge was in the room, bubbling over with plans. Did Katherine know that the plexidome was opened today in the Northwest Sector—theirs—because the temperature outside the dome was 76° and the area didn't need airconditioning? Katherine didn't know.

"There's special copter service to the shore today for the first 10,000 applicants. Katherine, do hurry. I ran over to tell you because I was afraid you would be sitting around mooning—" Katherine wondered if she started slightly. "—and might miss it. We have a treat waiting for all of us!"

"But 10,000 people on the beach! Plus vacationers who are there anyway."

"Now don't say you'd rather stay home and think about waves."

Katherine resolved definitely not to go. She felt a dread of the beach, all the stronger for being imprecise. She tried another tack. "Suppose . . . suppose . . . uh, Teddy got shoved off a wharf."

"Why, Ted would think it was an adventure."

"I'm quite sure it wouldn't be good for him to go out. He's sniffling."

"Another virus attack?"

"I'm afraid so. And the hospitals are too crowded these days to be any help in routine emergencies."

Madge sat down and tapped her lower lip reflectively. "Katherine, could Ted be taking too many of those things that make him feel he's a dinosaur? You know . . . Tops Tabs."

"My dear, don't you think I know how to take care of my own child?"

"I guess it wasn't any of my business, but—"

"But what?"

"Well, I was reading an article about all these new detensers, particularly the ones that activate unused parts of the brain. Isn't that what those Protoceratops Tablets do?"

"You don't have quite the right impression. Didn't you even read the circular that came with yours?"

"I never bought any."

"Oh!"

There was a somewhat stiff pause before Madge went on. "This article said they seemed to be frightfully debilitating. Doctors don't know why. They just observe results."

"Doctors have been arch-con-

servatives all through history, haven't they?" Katherine warmed to her theme. "I read an article myself before I gave any tablets to Teddy. Did you know the opposition to detensers comes from psychiatrists who are losing patients to the drug industry?"

"How many virus attacks has Ted had recently?" Madge counted on her fingers. "Six since September." Katherine could almost feel the thought of Theodore, Jr.'s sister pop into her friend's mind before Madge demanded, "What about Joyce?"

"Joyce," said Katherine with dignity, "never takes detensers. She's years too old for Tops Tabs, and Teddy's Lusty Pioneer Pills would never appeal to her at any ate. We can leave Joyce out of it."

"I guess," Madge grew a little apologetic, "I'm silly to worry about Joyce; but I do, almost as if she were my own daughter. She seems too withdrawn. She's such a pretty thing, and —"

"Oh come on, Madge. Leave it there." Then Katherine wrinkled her forehead, admitting, "I was shy, too, at her age." For a split second Katherine wondered if she had ever been as pretty as Joyce, Joyce with her rose-in-bloom cheeks and summer-sea eyes. "She'll wake up some day to the fact that there are boys."

"I hope so," said Madge. "Hope's what gets us past crises."

"Madge, I hardly know my own daughter." Katherine, still firmly resolved against the beach, started to draw a red herring over the trail.

"But you love her." Madge reacted as Katherine intended, and Katherine at once found herself feeling like a heel. "I guess everything will work out, because you want it to. Haven't you noticed how people get what they really want? It's uncanny." But Madge could be as resolved as Katherine. She ended, "You've been brooding till you're confused; so what you need is the beach."

Again Katherine felt shivery. She did not even want to know why.

"The beach, sure enough," Madge went on. "Why every single person you look at is a novel you haven't read—and there are so many people. Why should anybody want pills and drops and fantasy capsules? If I lived to be a thousand, I wouldn't have explored half people's possibilities."

"But Madge, my crazy vital darling, can't you feel the danger in people? It's there, lurking in every crowd, whether you sense it or not."

"There's danger, yes." To Katherine's surprise Madge admitted it. "But there's more danger in being without people. I see you as—forgive me—almost pathetic in your longing for them. Some

day I'm sure you'll flip over and almost scream your need aloud."

"*That* will be a day to see."

"It will, and it could be as near as tomorrow. Meanwhile today there's the beach, and it won't be shore and water and wind only. It will be songs you almost hear when you look at girls' faces, and—"

"You belong in this age. I don't."

"But you *could*."

"I don't want to. To me your beach would be people shoving everyone else—heads I couldn't see over—human noises everywhere. And there are seasons, Madge, as well as songs on girls' faces, but what with vacationers squealing all over the sand, nobody even listens for them any more. Why should they?"

"But you've got to live in this age." Madge threw her arms around her friend. "It's the only age you can ever really have."

"Worse luck!"

"Oh Katherine, think of the fun we could have together, we and our children, and our husbands too, making foursomes."

At Madge's mention of Theodore, Sr., Katherine felt an odd, old-woman stiffness over her body. She knew with relief that it couldn't possibly show. Madge went on, "This is the most exciting time mankind has ever known."

"I grant it's breathless."

"Yes. Problems come faster than they ever came before, and we have to use our minds the way no generation before us ever did. Can't you feel the present like a tingle along your spine?"

"No," said Katherine, "you make me want to, but—I just can't."

Madge looked at her silently—a full moment. Her face said, *Are you sure you aren't withdrawing in a hurry because you want to leave other people before they leave you?* Her lips explained, "We'll miss our copter if I stay any longer."

She started to go, then turned. "We're both mothers. We couldn't be anything but mothers. If you had nothing else to anchor you to the here and now, those children would do it." But Madge, the optimist, went out slowly, not the way she had come in.

Katherine stared at the sky where the plexidome was opening. The copters were in formation, ready to come down. Beyond them the cargo rockets went five abreast. Beyond the cargo rockets the advertising satellites spread their temptations across the heavens. She turned wearily back into her house.

Katherine stepped onto the accello-belt that led out of the living area. *Living area;* she smiled. As if you weren't alive when you were taking a bath, or

even asleep. Briefly she wished Madge were around to chuckle with her. Then she scowled with some enthusiasm.

If she couldn't actually leave an Earth where she was jostled every time she set foot in the street, if she couldn't go to a park on a Moon where nothing had ever proliferated, she would just step out of the whole mess for awhile. She'd be somebody else in a different country, a different century. Much Madge knew about staying in one age.

She, Katherine, would now take a DuBarry. She'd take three DuBarrys and . . . No, three was excessive, a week's dosage in one afternoon.

Katherine turned to face a row of bottles on the detenser shelf of the medicine niche. Two were empty. *Joyce!* she thought with a stab. Joyce had been sneaking capsules away and she had not even realized it. It wasn't just DuBarry, either. The equally dainty Lady Hamilton flask had nothing in it. That wasn't wholesome for a teenager. But thank heaven, they weren't habit-forming. It said so on the label in pretty script.

She'd have to do something, however, and fast, if her withdrawn daughter was not only a king's mistress but an enchantress captivating in succession a great artist, a gentleman of title, and the hero of the hour. As a mother she should have invited some real boys in for Joyce, though how on earth could she have done more than she was doing with little Ted sick the way he'd been recently?

Katherine eyed the detenser row and stopped at a squarish Florence Nightingale bottle. That certainly did not suit her mood now. Come to think of it, she never had wanted to be Florence, working in an overcrowded hospital. Who would? Her only possible interest would be—if she were Florence—in eliminating the unfit, selectively. She toyed with that idea for an instant. Maybe there was some kind of answer in that thought for high-positive vital statistics. Didn't the Human Mind eventually find an answer to everything?

Katherine switched rapidly from anything so philosophical to her immediate, practical grievance. Why had she ever ordered a Fantasy Economy Assortment? The manufacturers worked off unpopular items on you. There was nothing she really liked except the capsules Joyce had used up.

Probably it would be over a month before she could get a DuBarry order filled. A month. A whole dreary month. Katherine sighed dismally.

It wasn't that she wanted Louis XIV or XV or whichever he was for the afternoon. She had visioned herself dismissing all the

discreet attendants and sitting alone, uninterrupted, in her boudoir with the light coming dimmed through the silk hangings all of the quiet afternoon, while the King could not leave his ministers. And now—

She'd have to take something to get through a morning like this. Heavens, she'd be willing to take Tops Tabs. With an unexpected giggle, she turned to the smaller niche to look for them.

They were missing. *Oh Theodore pet,* she lamented silently, *didn't mother tell you always to ask first?*

Katherine glanced at the Lusty Pioneer Pills. Tentatively her hand reached out and touched the bottle, then petulantly she shoved it back. No, the Pioneeer was no more her style than it was Joyce's. She started for the third stage escalator, realizing that Ted had undoubtedly taken the tablets with him to the tiny-tot sector.

Tops Tabs for a woman her age! Katherine felt sheepish. But there hadn't been another thing she wanted to take in the economy Assortment, not one thing. She got off the escalator.

She smiled, an expectedly vivid smile at the thought of patting Teddy's smooth blonde head. It was adorable. She smiled the warm smile again. Then it occurred to her that she had not given the mature Theodore so much as a pat in—how long? When had she started to drift out of his orbit?

That was another thing to blame on twenty-first century Washington. There were so few matters about which a security-conscious husband and wife could talk. She stood stock still wondering at practically the same time how many of Jr.'s pills were left and whether or not Theodore Sr. had actually, as he told her, been staying at the office when he came home late. His hours were erratic. She had no way of checking on them. He had never given her his classified extension number.

Briefly she envied Madge whose husband was in Naval Recruiting. Madge and Tom could talk openly about office subjects. Why had she had to marry a man who was researching in a university on plasma debris at the auroral level? She ought to have guessed then where it would all lead, especially with his monograph on hydromagnetic waves thrown in.

She supposed she should have guessed, too, that Ted would give himself trips to the Jurassic—or was it the Cretaceous?—period on the sly. Maybe he was there now.

He wasn't. Ted and some friends were at it in the play area. Or at least friends played some rough and tumble game while he lay on his stomach and

watched them through half closed eyes. She had an odd impression that his lower lids had risen to meet his upper eyelids, but this—she told herself—couldn't be. She went toward him, oddly anxious, yet annoyed at herself for attaching any importance to what must have been a trick of the light.

She leaned over him. He blinked his handsome eyes quickly before he looked at her. Nothing at all the matter with his eyes, she noted. She sighed her relief with a deep breath.

Casually, almost too casually, she started to tidy the room, reluctant even to ask for Tabs. She would hate to have the youngsters start laughing. But finding the bottle proved no trick. Half of it stuck out from the thermocover of her son's bunk. Ted had taken a few, she saw, but not many. Katherine thought of scolding, but decided not to bring up the subject, though it was entirely natural that she should take the bottle away, she realized suddenly. She needn't have been so cautious. She left the room with it, not even bothering to see if any of the children had noticed.

She was holding something that would help her with any problem. Perhaps it would be better than Tycho Ringwall National Park. It was a good thing to get away from problems. She'd had them through her whole life. They went all the way back to her uneasy childhood, and now like something contagious, they were spreading and spreading. Almost greedily, her eyes rested on the bottle.

Lounging in her reclinoform on the descalator, Katherine read the label. It spelled out everything: *Be-ing a Di-no-saur Is Fun. You Will Be a Pro-to-ce-ra-tops. Let Moth-er Count Ten Tablets for You. Ex-act-ly Ten.* There was a pictured bottle after all that text, with ten—exactly ten—tablets spilling out. *You Will Real-ly Think You Are a Creature in a Prime-e-val World.* Katherine wondered if that was quite the way to spell primeval, not that it mattered much. She saw that the label included pictures of dinosaurs in a desert environment, for those who might have trouble reading; and that, Katherine reflected, meant practically every Washington child under twelve.

If ten tablets made the right dosage for Teddy, how many should she take? Twenty? They were sweet on her tongue. She swallowed them. Nothing happened.

So this was what she'd been paying for: some kind of candy. Her anger mounted briskly. She'd paid a perfectly outrageous price because tabs were educational. *Ed-u-ca-tion-al,* she thought waspishly. Hadn't she read everything in the circular that was

wrapped round the bottle, in order to tell Teddy?

These tablets weren't like fantasies. They were scientific. She had asked Ted, putting it all in simple language, if he knew that the biggest part of any human brain didn't do any work at all. Ted didn't know and really for a child his age he asked quite intelligent questions. She had to do a little fudging on the answers, but she did get across to him that the early, prehuman history of the race still existed inside man's skull the way gill-slits existed in a foetus, not that we had actually come from dinosaurs, of course . . .

Ted nodded. He was an alert boy, at least when he was well.

We didn't need these memories and these reactions now, Katherine explained, but they were there, and if he took the tablets, he would remember what man's ancestors knew millions of years ago. Or maybe longer. But he wouldn't quite lose connection with what nature evolved later; and the two parts of his brain, working at once, would make it all realer than real; and lots more fun and lots more exciting than living in either time. That was because the new part of his brain understood quite a lot about dinosaurs. . . .

Katherine was not too sure how it all fitted together, though the circular sounded extremely logical as she was reading it. So she had beamed at Teddy and kept still.

Fortunately Ted had been so anxious to get into the dinosaur world that he hadn't asked one question more.

The sweet taste of the tablets lingered in Katherine's mouth while she found her eyes closing. Did a thick lid rise to meet her descending upper lid?

Something warned her. Something urged her to make a great effort and wake up. But she was growing too comfortable, too toastily warm for effort among the thorn bushes that could not pierce her tough hide.

Yet part of Katherine that was twenty-first century began to take in an ancient problem. Only it was not Katherine's problem. It did not matter to her at all.

It simply amused her to be conscious of her new reptilian self, about the length of a man. She moved her powerful jaw, feeling the strength of its muscles and thinking what fun Ted must have had being a lizard. She wished, still feminine, that she could get a glimpse of her face. Since this was impossible, she recalled the pictures on the bottle, each with its parrot-like beak fiercely conspicuous against a deep-red desert.

She felt comfortable and deliciously dull. Without knowing

how she knew, she began to feel safe with the sunwarmed thicket protecting her so that the only part of her showing was the ruff of bone rising behind twenty inches of head.

She was thirsty, but she did not have to think of that. The nerves along her spine started her off in the direction of the water hole. She hadn't a thing to figure out.

The protoceratops lumbered along on all fours through her world of small inclines, and sand eddying on the wind. Eyes slitted, she went her sluggish, heavy-moving way. Presently she saw a place where, above the general aridity, tall reeds had been growing.

They were trampled now. She sniffed. She should have caught a good wet smell, but what reached her sensitive nose made her draw back. It came in gusts, foetid and dismaying—a stench of fouled mud and too many animals. Around her feet were tracks. Many. Closer to the waterhole even more showed in moist soil. Sharpclawed footmarks of a tiny lizard wove to and fro about more massive prints. These grew jumbled, the huge, the smaller. Many. Many.

Habit still drove her on. Habit made her put her head down where there used to be clear water, with now and then a smaller thing drinking near her, or something larger that would shove her away.

She did not remember this, even in pictures. She did not even feel anything wrong as she drew back. Her diffuse brain simply headed her to the next waterhole while the sun beat down, and something that was once Katherine felt a sort of mental luxury about the whole business.

As she wandered across her baked countryside she reached a hillock of sand, not the fine sort that packed densely, nor the heavy sort that would crush an egg by its very weight. The texture of that sand was pleasing in a dim way—as good as sunlight on her hide. She did not go straight to the mound. Without the least reason that she knew, she altered her course and went carefully around it. *Once a mother*—somebody commented to herself. The sun had grown hotter and the protoceratops stopped.

She saw an agile beast, saurian too, and small. It flicked its tongue while it considered her warily. She felt too warm to react to it, and had besides no particular reaction pattern for it along the paths of her nerves. The creature edged forward, scooped at the sand of the mound and unearthed an egg flatter than the eggs of—

Someone, somewhere, tried to think about eggs, eggs shaped to a blunt point, eggs that did not have a pebbly texture, eggs that were not flattened a little.

The protoceratops continued on over unending waves of sand. She caught the crunching sound of an eggshell. It did not matter to her at all.

On her way to a waterhole, she skirted another mound. She always did it. Two small things caught sight of her and fled. She turned her head a little as she passed and saw them slithering back toward the mound.

She repeated the experience many times, with small variations. She barely remembered any of it as she finally reached a spring where at last she could drink.

Coming to was a great nuisance, Katherine found. Consciousness reached out somehow and all the problems of the desert and of twenty-first century Washington assailed her at once. She had heard from her grandmother of nausea after anaesthetics. This was like nausea on a mental plane. No more for her. Here she was trying to solve a lizard's problems with a human brain—as if the problem had not long ago been solved by Fate. The bigger dinosaurs were really in the debt of those smaller ones that ate their eggs and kept them numerically adjusted to their water supply. Far from being a cause of the dinosaurs' extinction, the predators had been their saviors. Without them, dinosaurs would have had a much shorter day on earth. She had been there. She knew.

For no reason at all she shivered at this satisfactory solution, after which she grew much, much too warm. That was what Ted had complained of the last time he had a virus: getting cold, then getting feverish. Katherine grew nostalgic for sand warming a dinosaur during its morning siesta.

Katherine sneezed. She must have picked up some germ from the little boys. How humiliating, a children's ailment—at her age! Her own problems began to blank out those of the prehistoric desert. She felt completely dopey, but she'd have to rouse and get lunch.

She pressed a buzzer in the instrument panel of her bed and Time Service told her it was 1705 o'clock. Heavens! practically evening. She wondered what the children had browsed on for lunch. Or maybe they hadn't browsed. Maybe they'd trotted over to Madge's. Madge was always glad to take care of them and she'd probably gotten back in good time from the trip to the shore. Even Madge might have found the crowds there too much for her. There would be so many feet they would not even leave prints, unlike the creatures round the waterhole.

There was a great deal to be said for the world before Man. Maybe Man would have a manageable world again, if some-

thing *selectively* weeded out the — She did not follow the idea any further.

It was terribly hard to think, Katherine found. But she wouldn't just abandon her children, even if she did feel miserable. She plugged the magnetowave fumblingly in the appropriate socket of her bed's instrument panel, while she wondered how she'd gotten to bed. Maybe Joyce had steered her to her bedroom. She would set the mw dial at the right frequency and ask her daughter.

She did not get any answer to the mental waves she sent out, though she knew they must be decoding as speech in Joyce's room. She dialed for Ted. There was no answer.

On impulse, though she was sneezing hard now, she sat up and got Calendar Service. Why, it was tomorrow, or rather tomorrow was today. She found it confusing to express exactly, but apparently she had more than slept the clock round.

She had slept on her bed with out making a single thermal adjustment and it wasn't any wonder she was down with something. Joyce could have taken better care of her than that. Or Theodore when he came back from work. But then he didn't like her taking pills and tablets, and he might have thought it served her right. Maybe, she gulped, he would be glad if these children's tablets had a bad effect on an adult; if he could be rid of her. The suspicion left a feeling of bleakness greater than any she had yet felt. She had wanted to be alone, but not alone like this.

She tried to get rid of the idea. She told herself it was hard work being a woman in twenty-first century Washington, D. C., what with all the mechanisms she had to adjust every minute and all the personality difficulties that cropped up incessantly and viruses and all that and all that. Why, the next DuBarry flacon wouldn't be ready till— If she hadn't been flat on her back, she would have slumped.

She wondered where her children were. With a real effort she dialed one after the other again and got no reply, though she had set the dial at sonic and they must have heard what she was thinking if they were around. Since they weren't around— Oh well, everybody was kind to children. She didn't have a thing to worry about, she told herself, trying to fight off a fiercely maternal impulse to hold them tight to her. It was like nothing she had known since they had first been laid in her arms. Only it had been protective then. Now it was more than simply protective. There was personal desperation.

There could be too many people. But there could be too few.

There could be none. Or none that counted.

Suppose Joyce—Joyce was always so careless—suppose Joyce was lying on her own bed this very minute, dead to anything but Lady Hamilton's world.

Shakily, Katherine struggled to her feet. For a moment she tottered, less with weakness than with the dizziness of sudden realization. Joyce could be getting sick, getting terribly sick. She had to do something for Joyce—do it immediately even if it was no more than pulling a thermo into the right position.

Her child wasn't to dream herself out of existence, Katherine thought with passion. One of the unfit? Never. Never. And even if she were, her mother would protect her. The race could be saved from its own vitality, selectively, unselectively, but not at the expense of *her* children.

Katherine, with sudden clarity, knew she hadn't a problem any more. She had a project; projects weren't appalling and shuddery, like problems.

Momentarily she looked out beyond her own walls to the sky. An early moon shone in. It no longer meant anything to her.

Holding to the wall, Katherine reached Joyce's area. She had expected Joyce, Joyce needing her. But nobody was there. Nobody at all. To Katherine, the empty bed with its panel of instruments looked almost mocking.

She hurried on the accelloway to Teddy's quarters. No Teddy. But in the middle of the floor all by itself lay a beach shoe. She picked it up, hugging it blindly.

The rest of Teddy's beach things weren't anywhere. Katherine, thinking more quickly now, feared that while she slept, Teddy had heard, probably from Madge's brood, about the beach expedition. He'd decided to go on his own? Oh, why had she slept so long? Anything could happen to Teddy on the beach. People always loved him. They asked him to be their little boy. Complete strangers even. Was some woman doing that this very instant? "No," she whispered.

But Katherine's hand was at her throat. Her mouth went dry when, back-tracking, she found Joyce's beach togs gone too. She knew, as though she had seen it, how Teddy had cajoled his older sister into taking him. Their trip would cost a little, unlike Madge's free copter service, but the children had allowances. She checked their telacount. It registered thirty-seven cents.

Katherine thought of Joyce on the beach—with her wild rose beauty and the virginal lure of her shyness. So many people could want Joyce for so many reasons.

Katherine clutched a few things. She hardly realized she

gathered them up: money, a wrap, passes unused for years. She wished she could reach her husband. He couldn't be with the children, she reasoned through panic. He must be at work. The forgotten shoe marked this as Teddy's own expedition.

If she had chills now, if she was feverish, Katherine did not know it. But suddenly she saw one thing she was holding to her, along with her boy's shoe—his bottle of Tabs. She clung to it frantically. It was the color of the desert; it was the sundrenched slopes of sand, all mixed with the mindless peace of a lizard that laid its pebble-textured eggs and forgot them forever.

Theodore would be ready to kill her; yes, kill her if she couldn't find the children. She could never face him if—

But she could run away. She could stay hidden. Escape was in a handful of tablets, their pictures on a bright label. She reacted from deepest instinct.

Jerkily, savagely, she sent them crashing to the floor, and at that moment hope surged up. The sky was a rainbow. She knew she would get to the beach in time to find Teddy and Joyce. In time, though just barely.

COMING NEXT MONTH . . .

. . . an ALL STAR ISSUE, including most of the following.

The Lost Leonardo
by J. G. BALLARD

The Conventional Approach
by ROBERT BLOCH

A Red Heart and Blue Roses
by MILDRED CLINGERMAN

Incident in the IND
by HARRY HARRISON

Sacheverell by AVRAM DAVIDSON

Sun Creation by B. TRAVEN

LETTERS

Mr. Avram Davidson, Baby: Jack Sharkey's story [COLLECTOR'S ITEM, Sept. 1963] reminds me of my insurance agent's joke. When he can afford it, he's going to start the Gibraltar Insurance Company, with the slogan, "We have the strength of Prudential." Your agent will be happy to explain this to you, if necessary. Also, anyone who thinks the Rock of Gibraltar is an island has rocks in his head. Gib, as we pukka sahibs call it, is not only firmly and visibly attached to continental Europe, but also has a motor road leading to the Spanish town of San Roque. And then there's William Bankier's work [UNHOLY HYBRID]. Following Miss Joanna Russ's somewhat Gothick tale [THERE IS ANOTHER SHORE, YOU KNOW, UPON THE OTHER SIDE], it allows me only one conclusion. You're trying to revive Weird Tales. Why not revive Unknown, instead. You can stop sobbing now. I have a word of praise. I was happy to see that huge hunk of Heinlein plunked down amongst the junk. (Paddon me. I think I've been reading too much Walt Kelly.) I should say, I appreciate the pretty symbolism of a long installment by Heinlein crowding those precious litterateurs off the edges of the book. Oh, you're a sly dog, Davidson. I'd predict a succes de manque for you, if my typewriter had any italics. Seriously, now, no one expects a new plot in every story, or a complete absence of cliches, but you've been giving us too many banal little mood pieces, and hackneyed "plots" wrapped in "poetic" language. And even if you're afraid of robots (Mr. Herbert Franke's more-than-twice-told tale), go and borrow John Campbell's file of Unknown, and bring your authors into the twentieth century. But if nothing else, at least do away with the rococo language. None of us buy Science Fiction magazines for art. We want entertainment. So cater to our low tastes. Give us candy, not nice healthy carrots. Tammuz bless thee.—THOMAS P. LEONARD, Kinross, Mich.

El perro de San Rogue/No tiene ladro/Porque Thomas P. Leonard? Se lo ha robado.—AD

Now that your excellent Magazine has admitted the most welcome Gothick of Russell Kirk, might we hope for more reprints of traditional fantasy, if new works in the old patterns is hard to find? Say, reprints of Chambers, Dunsany, out-of-print Blackwood; and how about [H. P. Lovecraft's] *Beyond The Walls of Sleep* or *The Terrible Old Man*? A fruitcake that nutty is delectable with the dry wine of space opera.—JAMES WADE, Seoul, Korea

We are always open to suggestions of this sort.—AD

. . . I was startled to find one of your presumably female readers objecting to the "pornography" of Robert Heinlein's delightful GLORY ROAD, which I did not feel was any more "pornographic" than Poul An-

derson's novel to which it was compared. If this young lady feels that this story is objectionable, and is a Heinlein fan, as she seems to imply, how in the world did she ever get through Heinlein's Swiftian satire STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND, with its no-holds-barred nudity, group theogamy, etc., without having conniptions? Or didn't she? (Read it *or* get through it!) While I am on the subject of Robert Heinlein, may I suggest that, as you seem to be doing an occasional issue devoted primarily to the pioneers of the SF field, you do an issue in honor of Mr. Heinlein, if one is not already in prospect? I certainly think he has done as much toward the improvement of Science Fiction as a *genre* as anyone else in the field.—Mrs. VIRGINIA M. ALLEN, Detroit, Mich.

If there is one thing I despise, it is reading a serial with the editor's assurance that it is NOT A SHORTENED VERSION, and discovering afterward that an "expanded version" will be published in Septober by Charles Wattanobbie, Inc. I don't want to read "Shortened Versions" or "Specially Written Versions;" I want to read the COMPLETE product of the author's imagination. For cutting GLORY ROAD, tsk, tsk, tsk.—DAVID CHARLES PASKOW, Phila., Pa.

Alas, the "Complete product of the author's imagination" won't always fit into a magazine; experience has shown that three installments of c. 25,000 words are usually maximal, but the serialized version of GLORY ROAD *contained more, viz. 90,000 words; the cutting was done by the author himself. I gave no prior assurance that* GLORY ROAD *was "not a shortened version," however—a further note on this subject—I said of Damon Knight's* TREE OF TIME *that "Not one word has been cut . . ." This was true at the time, but after it had been set in type the publishers of the book version requested Mr. Knight to add 5,000 words, which he did. The book, therefore, will be in truth "an expanded version." This was not the case with* GLORY ROAD, *our note to that effect was in error, and I apologize for it. —AD*

Your note on page 23 of the October issue [ABOUT THE (Bonestell) COVER] is well meant but not quite right. My book WATCHERS OF THE SKIES . . . is a history of astronomy which has taken most of my time for the last three years. It is illustrated, but not by Chesley Bonestell; all the illustrations in my book are historical themselves, taken from the original publications. The Bonestell picture [F&SF's October cover] belongs into our next collaboration which will be published by Viking Press in May or June next year [1964]. Its title is BEYOND THE SOLAR SYSTEM.—WILLY LEY

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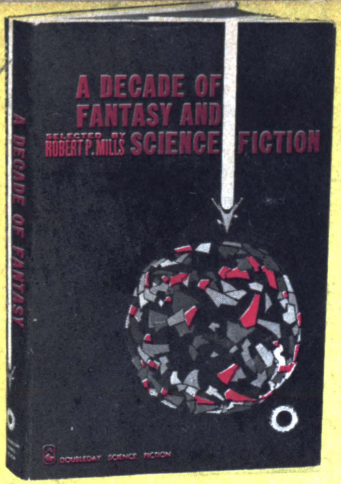
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