NEW & BIGGER ★ STILL 35c

OCTOBER 1959

FANTASTIC

SCIENCE FACT & FICTION

UNIVERSE

complete novelets by LESTER DEL REY ★ POUL ANDERSON ★ ROBERT SILVERBERG

SPECIAL FACT SECTION

Featuring

"THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN"

by ivan t. sanderson

"He Who Controls The Moon..."

Fantastic Universe goes monthly, once more, beginning with this issue.

The decision to do so, to change to a larger format, and to run more articles,—at a time when it has become fashionable to moan that Science has caught up with Science Fiction,—is a deliberate one. Henry Scharf, publisher of this magazine and of its companion magazine, *The Saint Mystery Magazine*, which I also edit (and of a group of other magazines including the tremendously interesting *Speed Age)*, is convinced that there is a market for a magazine which will carry science FICTION written for readers in 1959—and *not* 1949! We are going to bring you just such a magazine!

We will range far and wide in the articles. You will agree with some. You will disagree with others, but *all* of them will interest you! Ivan T. Sanderson, world famous explorer and scientist, begins a series of articles in this issue on THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN, and Sam Moskowitz, noted sf historian and author of "The Immortal Storm", begins the first of a series of illustrated articles, also in this issue, on TWO THOUSAND YEARS OF SPACE TRAVEL. In the next issue, Lester del Rey will start the first of a series on the problems of this atomic age, the peaceful uses of atomic energy—and the dangers. And we will feature, in an early issue, a picture story on the *Detention,* the 17th World Science Fiction Convention, held in Detroit over Labor Day Weekend.

Add to this fiction—in this and in the next issues—by Lester del Rey, Poul Anderson, Robert Silverberg, Randall Garrett, John Brunner, August Derleth, L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt (an unpublished Gavagan's Bar story) and you begin to realize that we do mean business when we tell you that *Fantastic Universe* is a magazine that you are going to be talking about, a magazine that you are going to buy, and a magazine that you will be telling your friends to buy!

But don't expect an ostrich-in-the-sand attitude to the world around us though! We live in an age and at a time when distances no longer mean anything. It took me eleven days to get to this country when I was a child. It'd take me less than eleven *hours* to go back on a visit, assuming I'd want to do so... We have truly become the neighbors of the world and stand today on the threshold of space itself. This demands an awareness of the world outside our own borders—borders which are close to anachronisms in the face of changing world conditions.

Tomorrow's World can be exactly what we make of it. It is up to us to decide how we are to approach this world,—whether we are to shed or to carry with us our fears and our sicknesses, or whether we are to walk into that light, our heads high, conscious of new responsibilities and new hopes in this New Age.

This is irrespective of the fact that conflict may well take place outside the stratosphere—the day *before* Tomorrow—as General Bouchey warned recently when he pointed out that we must secure control of the Moon as quickly as possible, because he who c o n t r o l s the Moon controls the Earth...

The Editor

Among Our Contributors

POUL ANDERSON —

Guest of Honor at the 17th World Science Fiction Convention, just held (Labor Day Weekend) in Detroit, is the author of EARTHMAN'S BURDEN, STAR WAYS, THE BROKEN SWORD, THE ENEMY STARS, etc. etc.

L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP and FLETCHER PRATT —

An unpublished Gavagan's Bar story is a literary discovery! We feel we are honored to bring you a second such story by L. Sprague de Camp and the late Fletcher Pratt, the noted historian.

LESTER DEL REY —

One thing said about Lester del Rey, and with a good deal of justice, is that all the characters created by him "are real, all are vivid and moving. All are alive." Del Rey, author of a series of articles on problems of this atomic age that begin in this magazine next month, is the author of ROCKETS THROUGH SPACE, ROBOTS AND CHANGELINGS, NERVES, etc. etc.

HARLAN ELLISON —

Still in his mid-twenties, Ellison has published more than a million words and is the author of RUMBLE (Pyramid), THE DEADLY STREETS and SOUND OF A SCYTHE (both Ace).

SAM MOSKOWITZ —

Author of THE IMMORTAL STORM, former editor of SCIENCE FICTION PLUS, Sam is justly called "the Historian of Science Fiction." SF fans are, as is well known, completists. Sam has one of the most incredible collections of SF material existent today.

IVAN T. SANDERSON —

Noted scientist and lecturer. Author of numerous books including the recent MONKEY KINGDOM (Hanover) and LIVING MAMMALS OF THE WORLD (both Hanover).

ROBERT SILVERBERG —

Author of THE 13th IMMORTAL, MASTER OF LIFE AND DEATH, INVADERS FROM EARTH, STEPSONS OF TERRA, etc. (all Ace) and of STARMAN'S QUEST (Gnome).

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Virgil
Finlay

mine host, mine adversary

by LESTER DEL REY

IT HAD been nearly fifteen years since the civilian rocket field had seen more than local traffic. Now, in spite of the bustle of emergency attendants and crews, the field buildings looked forlorn and deserted. Even some of the posters were of vintage brand. One, sheltered from the rain and sun, was still legible in its early crudity:

TO BE BEATEN
IS TO BE EATEN!

The red letters were smeared across the faded, scabrous purple of a tree-like horror with exaggerated fangs and filthy hands clutching at a tender young girl, its grotesque mouth drooling. Such direct appeal to fear of the Xanthot was no longer used, and the idea of being beaten was no longer mentioned, of course. Someone had slapped a modern *win NOW* slogan over it, but inferior paste had loosened and the old sign still flaunted its crudity.

Paul Weinblum sat staring at it until the rest of his group had left the bus, self-conscious in the loose civilian garb they had all been issued. He saw the bus driver's impatient eyes on him, sighed, and started after the group.

"Free Earth!" the driver muttered, irritation heavy in the needless farewell.

Paul nodded. "Yeah, free Earth."

Outside, Earth seemed no more free here than in any other of his limited experience this trip. Guards shunted him hastily through a door of the nearest building, down hallways, and into one of many temporary booths. There was a bench, an ashtray and a list of instructions to civilians for the week. What might have been a window was covered with a garish poster of a huge Earth super-

imposed on the galaxy, demanding that he *Remember Earth's Destiny.*

He was on his third cigarette when the door opened and a mousy little man in Major's uniform entered. The man stood staring appraisingly for a moment, then nodded. Remembering the group with which he'd come, Paul realized he must look good by comparison; he was slightly over average height, fairly well-built, and his fair skin and dark hair lent a touch of vividness to a face more sensitive than handsome.

"Free Earth," the Major said. "Your full name?"

"Paul Benjamin Weinblum—the third."

Shock touched the Major's face. The man's hands stopped shuffling his papers, then hastily resumed, until he found the right card. His face was frozen when he looked up, but his voice betrayed his reaction. "*You* volunteered?"

It wasn't that surprising, Paul thought. In twelve years of being shuffled from outplanet to outplanet in routine clerical jobs, his isolation and loneliness had never become acceptable. His only taste of battle in the hate-filled war between Xanth and Earth had been by pure accident. He had begun as a lieutenant, and it was still his rating. The few pleasant memories he had were on Earth, during his youth, when even he could hide in the great, self-centered swarm of some metropolis. It was no surprise that he had grabbed the first chance to return, even though his two days here had been too closely guarded to justify his hopes. The only amazing part was that he'd been accepted.

The Major had been whispering into a tiny mike on his c h e s t, but now he closed the switch with a shrug. "Okay," he said. "It's their funeral. You've been briefed on your duty?"

"I'm acting as a messenger for part of some formula too secret to send by code. I gather it's broken down into hundreds of parts, and I'm only one of several carrying the same part. It's the biggest and most important—"

"That'll do," the Major told him. "Okay, here's your identification, civilian allocations, and your message unit. When you have it absolutely memorized—make sure of that—burn it and crumble the ashes into the ashtray. Then ask the guard for Flight 2117. You've got half an hour. He paused, then shrugged. "And good luck, Weinblum."

Paul had worried about the memorizing; but as he ripped open the envelope and glanced at the printing there, he found his worry was unfounded. *"521: Theta over K is greater than e."* It meant nothing, of course, but the hardest part was the number—and he found an association to nail that down within a minute. It took longer to dispose of the message than to memorize it.

A bored guard motioned him toward the main building. Outside, he stopped, gazing across the field. There were a dozen out-of-date hulks being readied for takeoff, and three times as many were being serviced in hangars. Earth must be scraping the bottom of the barrel to provide for the flights that must be going on all over the world. And each ship must carry a full load of passengers to mask the messengers. How much truth had there been in the rumors of an ultimate weapon that would wipe out a whole planet at a single stroke? He'd never believed the scuttlebutt about a new field theory that

would produce such miracles, but this elaborate system of messengers almost seemed to justify some such major discovery.

Involuntarily, his eyes rose to the old sign, then turned toward the pale sky. But there could be no danger of Xanthot over Earth, even now. The anti-matter rocket trails going and coming steadily over the military base showed the earthguard still in command. Other planets might die under the attacks of the Xanthot, but the heartland would be preserved. So far, neither side had tried an attack on the other's homeplanet for fear of retaliation; but if ultimate weapons could exist...

A Captain of the military guards took his flight number and pointed across the huge waiting room toward a roped-off section, jammed with waiting people. Around the room were other such crowded sections. It was a mob of people, but a silent one. And the silence told him how the groups of fifty volunteers had been found to cover the messengers. They were heading out to an unwanted destination or to oblivion only because various pressures had made it easier to volunteer than to stay. Sullen, resentful faces glared at the guards or stared at the floor, marking their owners as the failures, the mothers with sons in police trouble, the old men existing on precarious relief, the hopeless and the weak.

There was a space beside a brown-haired girl busy with a newspaper, and the Captain motioned Paul to it.

"Sit here and keep your mouth shut till the gong sounds. Then march out in order. You got twenty minutes."

The girl dropped the paper and stared at the guard. Paul saw in surprise that she was fairly pretty and expensively dressed. Her grey eyes seemed to switch from strain to a dark amusement as she swung toward him. "Care for the paper?" she asked. "All the latest details of the Nineteenth Sector battle!"

Paul took the paper mechanically, watching the red-faced guard covertly. For a second, the Captain seemed about to speak. Then, with a face freezing into a blank, the man turned and moved off. The girl smiled faintly.

The newspaper account was no more than could be expected. All Paul could learn definitely was that a Xantha fleet and an Earth force had engaged in the Nineteenth Sector. He'd read accounts in which men he knew had been engaged in battle, and he was sure the words in print would be true—but with no relation to reality. Yet he read the whole story, hoping to get some hint from it. He finished with a hunch that Earth had lost badly. He tried to track down his reasoning, but a shrill whispering behind him drew his mind away—something about police breaking in and rousing a poor body from her sleep and forcing her here. A guard put a sudden end to the whisper, but Paul could not recapture his thoughts.

"We lost!" It was the girl beside him. Her voice was clear and loud, but no guard looked toward her. Seen full face, there was something about her that looked familiar...

She nodded, as if reading his mind. "Patricia Obanion, youngest daughter of *the* Senator Obanion, ordered home by my father. That's why I know we lost the battle."

"But—a passenger on *this* ship?" The treason to Security implied in her words meant nothing compared to other implications. If Obanion's

daughter were going on his ship, then there must be little danger. He'd been doubtful of his chances before, but this must mean almost a milk run!

"Dad made haste of the essence, and no convoy was ready to any place where I could trans-ship for the estate," she said coolly. There was a bitter, taut amusement on her face. "So here I am. And you?"

He gave his name and saw her eyes widen. But there was no time to catch her full reaction before the gong in the section began ringing.

With a collective gasp of relief at anything to break the tension, the section lined up under the guards' orders and began marching toward their ship. Someone began screaming hysterically and there was the sound of a slap, followed by silence. They crossed the field, stumbling around pits that no one had repaired. At close range, the ship—an old Osca model—seemed ready to fall apart; inside, it was rusty and unkempt, though there was evidence of repairs where most needed. A teen-age steward began calling out their cabin numbers, separating men from women. Paul realized that it was a minimum comfort ship with only community toilets, intended for trips of no more than a few light years.

He found his cabin and strapped in before the first siren. A minute later, the siren screamed again, and the old ship began lumbering upwards on ion blast to get beyond atmosphere. There was nothing gentle in the three-gee lift; the Captain was saving fuel, not catering to the passengers.

If things were as bad on Earth as all this indicated, then the message which he carried must be even more important than he had thought.

They climbed to first radius and the rockets cut off, to be replaced by the whine of a big high-frequency transformer. The ship must still be equipped with an antique boron-fusion motor; no anti-matter inverter ever made that much racket. But the leap to hyperspeed was smooth, indicating the engineer knew his job.

He'd heard that men once considered light speed the ultimate, and were totally unaware of ultra-radiation. Long after Heisenberg's space quanta had been added to Planck's energy quanta and the inevitable time relationships had been derived, men had failed to see the possibilities. It took nearly a century before they discovered that the phase relationship between time and space could be altered. The discovery led to ships of theoretically unlimited speeds, limited only by the skill of the engineers and the inevitable meeting and clash with the carnivorous plant-men of Xanth.

As pseudo-gravity came on, Paul unfastened himself and headed for the tiny lounge. He had no idea of his destination or the ship's speed, but there was depilatory cream for two weeks, and he had no desire to stay cramped in his cabin that long.

There was one man already in the lounge, standing in front of the Dirac projection of Earth which every ship carried. He was a neutral-colored man of about middle age, wearing the uniform and sleeveband of a Senior Sergeant. As he stood wholly entranced before the ceremonial globe, Paul could see that his skull showed a metal-plate, where crude emergency surgery must have been practiced. Then the man swung about suddenly, his eyes suspicious as he saw Paul.

"So you're the messenger," he ob-

served at last, his face clearing. "I'm Sam Meekings—free-will volunteer. Only way I can serve now. If we run into snakes, I'll try to pass as the man they want—or I'll shoot you, if they get wise. You can trust me; I been fighting snakes twenty years."

"Why?" Paul asked. He'd thought his identity as messenger was known only to the necessary few.

"Why?" Sam's expression was uncomprehending. "Why? Because the snakes want to steal Earth. Earth! Man, what other reason? We can't have a bunch of lousy, stinking cannibals..."

"I mean what makes you think I'm a messenger?"

The indignation faded, to be replaced by heavy self-satisfaction. "Oh, that! Well, I still hear things. And I figured the right guy will be the only one who knows space enough to come here first thing. Besides, you look about right. Well, Free Earth!"

He lifted his hand toward Paul, then swung about to make a full salute to the globe before marching back down the hall toward his cabin. Even without the uniform, there could have been no question but that he had been part of the original Earth Regulars.

Paul stared at the globe idly, hardly seeing the familiar object. It was a replacement of the old flags and banners. The Dirac projection made it an exact image of the original, a local and microfractional real Earth, with every particle of the planet linked in identity with this copy. The clouds seen here were the real clouds back there now; under magnification, even the trails of rockets could be seen until they passed beyond the field. Wherever men went, Earth went with them.

On the lists beside the shrine of the globe, he located the lifeboat assigned him, and went looking for it. Pat Obanion and Sam Meekings were listed for the same boat, perhaps by coincidence. It lay off the hall from the lounge, and he paced the distance, fixing it until he could have found it in the dark. Then he wandered off to investigate the ship; there wasn't much to see, except for the obvious age of everything, but familiarity with it might offer some help in an emergency.

When he returned to the lounge, it was already filling up. Paul spotted Pat across the room and dropped down beside her uncertainly. A few words were hardly an excuse to force himself on her, of course. But she turned to him almost eagerly, and he saw that her face was tautened and no longer amused.

"Trouble?" he asked.

"I'm scared," she said, and she sounded it. "Just scared. Scared sick!"

He glanced quickly at the rest of the room, frowning at what he saw. Worry was turning into hysteria here, already so thick that it seemed to clot the air. Alone in space, probably mostly on their first trip beyond Earth's battle defenses, the passengers were remembering every lurid story propaganda had fed them of flesh-eating horrors from Xanth. And they were passing stories back and forth, infecting each other as a mob would always do. There wasn't even a steward to break up their panic.

He dropped a hand on one of hers, unsure of how to handle an Earth woman of her station, but deciding to make light of things. "Nothing to be scared of. I only ruin Earth girls on Tuesdays, Pat."

"Ruin?" She laughed raggedly and far back in her throat. Her fingers tightened convulsively on his hand. "What's ruin now? If that's what will untie all the knots inside me, I'll beg you for it in another ten minutes! Paul, I've never been scared like this before—and it's getting worse!"

If she were that close to the primitive values of a scared mob, he'd have a case of pure hysteria on his hands in no time. "Don't be a fool, Pat Obanion! If there were any danger, do you think they'd send you on this ship?"

"Wouldn't they just. *Exilist eaten by plants! Senator's daughter tortured!* They'd love it in the papers. They want me killed!"

"Then shut up before you torture yourself to death," he told her brutally. But it had no effect that he could see. He was beginning to get the picture, and he didn't like it, since it pulled away his one reasonable hope of safety. She must have been left too much uncared for by her father, and she'd drifted into one of the crazy college movements devoted to ending the war by deserting Earth altogether and letting Xanth have it. She'd evidently been discovered, but saved by her father. The government would have hushed it up, but not forgotten.

Earth never forgot. He'd been only four when his father deserted Earth, but the story still stuck to him. He was the son of the infamous Weinblum, the once-great social ecologist who led a group of crackpots to join the Xanthot. *And the sins of the fathers shall be visited unto the sons...*

Not just the sons, either. Paul's mother had committed suicide two years later, and his grandfather was now insane after years of detention and grilling. Paul had been brought up by the state, drilled in the patriotic propaganda of a military academy, yet never trusted. He'd been under eternal surveillance, and had remained a lieutenant while his classmates rose rapidly. He could understand the fear and the foolish attempt at rebellion on the part of a lonely girl. Who better?

He pulled her around, gripping her knees between his legs, and his fingers dug into her waist. "Listen, then, and try to understand. I'm going to be honest with you. Listen, damn it! There are more than ten thousand of these ships leaving Earth, going in every direction at every possible speed. By now, they cover half the galaxy, probably. The Xanthot can't catch them all—or even the majority, without detailed flight plans. So we have a better than fifty-fifty chances..."

For a moment, he thought he was making progress. Some of the tension seemed to fade from her face. At least she wasn't looking at the other frightened groups or borrowing fear from them! Then a woman began to scream in hysteria, and it was soon joined by a man's high-pitched laughter. Unless something happened fast to break it up, the whole ship would be out of hand.

Abruptly, the door from the control section snapped open, and Paul sighed in relief as an officer appeared. But the ratty little man in engineer's uniform seemed unaware of the hysteria. Looking straight ahead, the man went leaping toward the engine room. He was screaming gibberish that sounded worse than any passenger's terror.

He was barely out of sight when the ship shook violently, and a brazen clang thundered from one side. A laggard warning light came on uselessly. From outside the hull, metal began screaming with the sound of a hundred buzz-saws!

Xantha grapples and boarding saws!

The control section door opened again and an old, fat shipmaster pounded out, heading after his engineer. His voice was a gasping, choking whine. "Didn't even see 'em. Couldn't spot 'em. Matched us on hyperspeed course without warning. Nobody saw 'em!" His words faded into the engine-room, still carrying his shock at a maneuver most civilians thought impossible, though any good military navigator could match a hyperspeed course.

Paul was on his feet, dragging Pat toward the lifeboat station. Now the side wall of the ship began to give way, splintering off in a circle under the billion tiny explosions of the boarding saws. The other passengers froze in panic or began rushing about in sick confusion. Most couldn't yet realize that the Xanthot were outside, but their bodies acted convulsively from shock.

The wall caved in, falling across two of the passengers. And through the hole came the Xanthot.

Paul had seen Xanthot before as prisoners and in his single battle experience, but it was still a shock to him. They were taller than men, and seemed ten feet high in the glare from the blue-lit ship behind them, now sealed tightly against the Earth vessel. There was a stench from the thick air they breathed that was already seeping into the lounge.

One of them shoved to the middle of the lounge. He was ugly by all Earth standards, though less grotesque than the propaganda posters showed. The purplish skin was stretched over a boneless body whose hard tendons looked like wooden supports. His body had none of the clear separation of purposes to be found in Earth animals, but seemed to run together like sealing wax that hadn't quite melted. It wasn't hard to see him as the remote descendant of a tree-like plant, now grown fantastically mobile.

The leader croaked gutteral orders in Xanthii, then waited while others moved off to the cabins and began dragging or carrying the passengers into the lounge. One of them dropped beside the two who had been trapped under the falling wall. After a brief examination, his tendril-hands reached out to surround the neck of one. With a bulging of the heavy cords on his arms, he pinched the head off and turned to the other human.

Paul felt Pat's fingers digging into his shoulders. Her face was bleached to a whiteness that made her lips seem blue, but her eyes met his with more surprise than horror. "I'm not afraid any more," she said wonderingly.

"Good girl," he whispered back. It often happened that way; good metal was tempered by the fire. Fear had its place, but not in an emergency. "Stick close to me. Maybe we'll have a chance yet."

The Xantha leader caught the two human heads thrown to him by his underling. He slapped them together for attention. It was crude nastiness, but it worked.

"All right, filthy sap-suckers," he shouted. His flexible voice was pitched in exact duplication of that

of the Earth president. "Line up. I haven't got all day to mollycoddle you. I've got other human ships to catch. Back to the wall, damn you, and strip. I want to see every left arm stuck out and no flinching when we fill you with truth-juice. Move!"

Paul began moving, edging in and out as he tried to seem shuffled by the stumbling, moaning passengers and equally scared crewmen. He could feel Pat's hand still clutching at his shoulder, and they were making progress; but the passage to the life boat was still too far. He spotted Sam Meekings some distance away, and took pains to make sure that there was no direct line between them, though the sergeant's gun was still sheathed.

Abruptly, the ship began to lurch uncertainly. The engineer was trying to tune speed erratically, trying to jerk free before the Xantha ship could match maneuvers. He was revving up beyond safe limits and then back. In the hands of an expert, it sometimes worked, but Paul had little faith in the old engines. The maneuver gave him a chance, however, since the Xanthot here were jolted almost as much as the humans.

The head Xanthol whistled a series of squawks in emergency code, and two female Xanthot in technicians' uniforms came from the big ship, carrying something that was obviously a bomb. They weren't going to waste time cutting through to the engine room.

Paul saw Sam motion to him, but he needed no urging. He was slipping toward the lifeboat entrance with little attempt at concealment now. It was too obvious, apparently. The Xantha leader hooted and pointed toward him.

At the first hoot, Sam Meekings let out a yell from the old Regulars and the gun came out of its holster. One arm swept up to rip the Dirac globe and its base from the ship mountings, while his other hand began firing toward the Xanthot. He wasn't aiming carefully, and the bullets ricocheted crazily from metal walls. The Xanthot weren't prepared for his action. They ducked instinctively, though the bullets couldn't kill them unless their brains or stomach nerve centers were directly hit.

Paul found the hatch emergency trip and struck it. In spite of the rust and dirt, the hatch split open instantly, revealing the entrance to the little lifeboat in its hocket. The entry port swung itself apart and he swung Pat in, twisting to look for Sam. At that instant, the sergeant found his chance and came charging forward, sweeping everything aside. He heaped through the hatch and turned to help Paul dog it shut. Outside, two Xanthot made a crash against it seconds too late; it could not resist them long, but for the moment it held. The two men shoved into the lifeboat, locking the port behind them.

"Get moving!" Sam motioned Paul forward, while he squatted down in the rude seat beside the little engine. "They'll have saws on the hatch in half a minute!"

Paul pulled himself up and tried to trip the relay circuit that would eject the boat from its socket; but the lurching of the mother ship was too violent now, and he had to stop to lock his legs over the pilot stool for support. If they could get beyond the phasing field of the big ship, they would lose hyperspeed drive and drop instantly back to their take-off speed, while the big ships went

on for incredible distance ahead in seconds. Then, with their engines dead and no radiation to pinpoint them, they could wait with a fair chance of missing detection in the time the Xantha ship could afford to waste on them.

He grabbed for the release again, but nothing happened. The relay was probably corroded. He reached for manual control. Behind him, he heard Pat's gasp and a sharp curse from Sam.

A quick glance toward the side vision screen showed that the two Xanthot had broken through the hatch, using hand axes instead of waiting for the saws. They were bracing themselves for an assault on the boat port, which could hardly resist their attack; but the lurching of the ship made progress difficult for even their strength.

The scream of the overdriven transformer cut through the metal walls as the engineer fought desperately and with some skill to break free. Then it was drowned in an explosion that must be the bomb crumpling the engine-room door, just as the transformer had reached its maximum peak of tuning. There was a violent wrench as the ship's pseudo-gravity generator cut off, but Paul had the boat's unit on, and the little independent field saved them from most of the shock as it took up the added load.

As the explosion died away, there was a final scream from the big transformer. Then, unprotected by pseudo-gravity and under an impossible burst of speed, the big ship seemed to warp into itself. The overtuned transformer must have shorted out and sent all the energy of the boron fusion tube through its primary coils. There were now no Xanthot or humans left in the collapsing hollow of the lounge—only ugly stains against the rear wall. The Xanthot ship must have been shaken off instantly.

The three in the lifeboat had been protected by their own field. But the slowly collapsing drive field was still resonating too far up to permit the little boat's automatic safety device to eject them at this speed. The bomb and the engineer's efforts must have achieved the long-sought ultimate tuning by accident, and there had been no overload breaker in the ancient ship to save it. They were approaching infinite velocity in the few seconds it took the field to collapse back along the massive inductance of the transformer coils, if Paul's grasp of theory was correct. There was no guessing where they'd come out along the line of their original flight path—whatever that had been.

Paul glanced back to see how Sam was doing with the ion and drive field motors, then swore to himself. The sergeant had propped the Dirac globe against a small locker and was saluting it, apparently counting coup over the dead Xanthot. Pat was busily rummaging through the other supply lockers.

Leaving the control locked for release, Paul pulled himself back to the engine. There was a fuel drum hooked to the engine injector, but it was reading almost empty. He turned to look for another, as a sudden lurch signalled that the lifeboat had broken free just as the incredible speed began to decrease. He glanced at the front screen, to see empty space and stars, which meant they were back at underlight speed, no longer affected by the main ship

field.

There were no other fuel drums visible, and the locker marked *Fuel* was already gaping open and empty. Pat saw his stare and spread her hands. "I can't find any kind of supplies. All the lockers are empty."

She was right. There was no trace of fuel, water of food. The tanks of oxygen that should have been in the nose section were gone. They could exist on the air renewal devices for perhaps a dozen hours, provided there was energy from the engines or batteries, but after that they would be finished.

Sam had finished his ritual, apparently, since he now came over beside the others. He nodded sourly at the news. "Nobody bothered to restock the boats, or else some outplanet scum at the field was swiping things for the black market. Well, let's see what we've got." He found a wrench and loosened the top of the fuel drum, to examine the short coils of thick, green substance leading to the feeder tube. There were less than thirty feet of Boron-10 altogether.

"Takes about fourteen feet to run an ion rocket this size for set-down on Earth," he said. "That is, if I can remember from when we used things like this. Not much left for hyperspeed. Maybe a light year and a half." His voice dropped to a whisper. "Better dump the girl if we need more than a few hours to drift somewhere. We may need the air."

"The girl," Paul told him sharply, "is Senator Obanion's daughter."

The sergeant blinked, then made a sort of half bow. "Sorry, lady. Nobody told me before. So I guess we'd better look for a place to land, eh? If things look bad, I'll draw lots with the lady."

Paul had uncapped the front part and was staring at the space ahead. There were more than enough stars in view, and one looked brighter than the others. But without instruments or charts, there was no way of knowing its true magnitude or estimating its distance. With a decent supply of fuel, he'd have made a fast jump half a light year closer to take a better look, but that would be wasteful.

"It looks like one of the views of Sector Thirty," Pat said. "Those three stars over there, and the formation to the left."

Sam swore, echoing Paul's thoughts. The sectors beyond Twenty Seven were all Spatia Incognito, a No-Man's Space where neither Earth nor Xanth had control, except for a few secret, scattered assembly planets.

"Just our luck to run into a maggot sector," the sergeant grumbled. The maggots were outcolonists who had renounced their Earth connections; they took no part in the war and were as likely as not to share a planet with renegade Xanthot. Both Earth and Xanth drew their spies from the mixture, but there was no love for the people on the renegade worlds. "Nothing to do, though. Can you range a planet?"

Surprisingly, the ultrawave ranger was workable, and its design had been settled so long ago that this model offered no difficulties. Paul set it to seeking for a transmitter or ship drive field. Almost at once, the screen lighted with a group of lines, most of them converging at one point less than five hundred light seconds from the brightest star. It must have been a small star, about minimum for a type G-O emission, since the ranger indicated only a little over a light year separating them. The number of ship trails might indicate that it was

one of the assembly planets of either Earth or Xanth; there was no coding on the ranger. Certainly, if it were a maggot planet, it must be a most unusually active one.

He glanced at the others, but they could only nod doubtfully. Then he set up his course plotter for what must be the planet whence the lines converged, hoping the ancient equipment would work. At Sam's call from the engine station, he threw the master control.

The light blinked out of the port, which indicated that the engines were developing some measure of hyperspeed; without ultrawave vision screens, he had to fly blind, depending only on the ranger traces. It took them nearly ten minutes to cover half the distance to their destination point. By that time, the last of the ship traces ahead had all converged and disappeared, but now a faint pip indicated what might be a weak transmitter on the planet. The flight must have been a single swarm, with all ships converging at once. The lifeboat continued on, apparently holding course and speed. The transmitter trace disappeared, but Paul had set the plotter for automatic, and they plunged on for another few minutes.

"How much margin." he called.

"You'll have a couple feet to spare," Sam answered. That is, if you don't waste it and the planet's no worse for a landing than Earth. Better hope it's a low-gee world."

It couldn't be high gravity, if the ships going to it had been used by humans. Men didn't like heavier worlds than Earth, though the Xanthot felt happiest at about double Earth gravity. Now they were getting close, if the course had been right, and the warning light blinked softly on the panel. Paul switched the ion rocket motor on standby and waited, tensing as the final seconds ticked by. Then the hyperspeed drive clicked off.

For a moment, he could make out nothing as the shock of light from the port hit his eyes. Then his vision began to clear, and he could see the planet ahead, its nearest hemisphere almost entirely in sunlight. They must be no more than three thousand miles up, which was better navigation than he'd hoped.

It was smaller than Earth, obviously, and there was a reddish cast to it that indicated large areas of desert. But there were other sections of bright green, and clouds floated high enough to show a fairly dense atmosphere with sufficient water for support of life. It must be a planet inhabited by humans, where he could at least—

Where he could what? It hit him suddenly that his mission was already a failure. With no idea of the destination of his message and no way to crack the supposed secrecy from Earth about the whole thing, he was washed out as a messenger. Someone else would have to do the job on his unit. If he still had his military papers, he could eventually work his way through some kind of official channels to a reassignment in the Service, but they'd been destroyed when his civilian papers were issued. As a civilian, nobody would listen until he could reach Earth through civil message service, which might takes years in the present confusion. Only commissioned officers could send through military channels. Since he had no normal civil skills, about all that was left was to try re-enlisting at the bottom as routine Xantha fodder. The prospect

didn't make him happy, though he probably should have been burning with patriotism after this last Xantha attack. Maybe too many years of being shuffled into the dullest jobs because of his name had deadened his taste for a soldier's glory.

"Going down," he called. There was nothing else to do, except die of lack of air. Now the lifeboat profitted from its stripped condition. He wasn't much of a pilot, but the long spiral d e s c e n t began smoothly enough. At least the ion dischargers were not fouled.

At a hundred miles up, he passed over a glint of metal that must have been the location of the field where the ships he'd seen were berthed. It would be the proper place to land in an emergency on a military planet; and he had no idea of what was proper elsewhere. He began tightening his spiral to bring him over the place for his landing. The ultrawave was silent, surprisingly. He waited, not wanting to break local Security, while the lifeboat fell steadily, picking up speed and heating a little as it dropped. Its stubby wings were biting the air now, offering some help.

There was still no signal from the set when he flipped around and shot out his braking jet.

Sam was scowling but silent as he watched the fuel feed away. Pat was too busy fighting against the fourgee pressure to bother with anything else. But now Paul could see that there was a field down there, covered in a random and highly unmilitary pattern with ships that seemed to be of all different sizes. He spotted one fairly large open space—big enough, he hoped, for him to set down in it—and began heading for that. Crude houses beyond formed a town of some sort. It didn't look like a military base, but it seemed surprisingly open for a maggot camp. Actually, out here in Sector Thirty, it would be hard to guess what either might be like.

The landing, when it finally came, was r o u g h, and he skidded to the very edge of the open space. It was his good luck that the boat didn't require the tail-down landing that most of the ships seemed to have made. He straightened shakily, but no damage had been done, and the others were unhurt.

"Three feet of fuel left," Sam reported. "I'd better prime this thing for use again if they want us tc move it somewhere else on the field. You and the lady go ahead."

For the first time since leaving Earth, amusement gleamed in Pat's eyes, but she made no comment as she helped Paul undog the little port. Paul realized she thought Sam was simply avoiding all risks until he found out more about the planet. In that, she was only partly right. Meekings was unquestionably brave enough to risk his life without question for a good cause; but he also knew the value of conserving manpower until it was needed and of keeping a rearguard when it might be needed. Undoubtedly he had realized that there was no longer a message to be delivered or to demand that he draw fire from Paul.

There was a party of two men and a woman moving toward the lifeboat as Paul and Pat came through the port, but there was no indication of hostility. One man, bearded and older than the other, raised a casual hand as he drew nearer. "Hi, what happened? Ship break down? You're a bit late for the *misva*, you know.

Most everybody else got here right on schedule, and they've pretty well scattered. Good crop this year, too. Know what village you're settling?"

Paul shook his head. "Nobody said," he answered, trying to make his vague answer sound normal. This wasn't military, obviously, but he saw none of the degenerate evidence of a maggot culture; it might have been any one of the hundreds of pastoral worlds before the war began.

The bearded man shrugged. "No matter," he decided. "We probably have a list for you at the pneumotube. If not, some village will take you in." Then he frowned, studying Paul more sharply. "You're kind of old for exchange, ain't you?"

"We had to take care of things," Paul told him. All he could do was hope the man would interpret the words from more complete knowledge and make something from the answer. Pat was leaving things in his hands, merely looking innocently friendly.

"Family troubles, eh? Yeah, it can happen. Shouldn't, but still does. Damned matriarchy tradition's hard to break. Where you from?"

It had to boil down to some such question eventually, Paul realized. All those ships couldn't have come here without purpose and take-off points. He couldn't stall longer, and had to depend on what little he could remember of the unsettled and casual state of some of the isolated worlds and a hasty guess founded on the assorted types of ships here.

"To tell the truth," he answered, "I guess we don't rightly belong. We're from a little world a couple thousand light years back that way, sort of out of touch. We didn't even have a ship—just the old lifeboat. But we caught word of all this, and we wanted to join up. So—"

He stopped, trying to judge the reaction. Apparently his estimate of conditions hadn't been too bad. The bearded face split into a wide grin, and the man came closer, sticking out an impulsive hand. "Say, that's wonderful. We're glad you made it, son. And while I guess it's too late to exchange this time, next year we'll see your world gets first pick. Why don't you join my village? We'd be proud to have you."

He had joined them, facing back toward the rough huts that seemed to be only temporary dwellings. Now he began urging them forward. The red-head beside him started to follow, then halted and whistled sharply. "Hold it, Mike! Ramrod!"

He took off at a hard run toward the huts. The other two jerked around toward the ships. Paul turned more slowly, to see Sam coming out of the lifeboat port, apparently convinced that everything had gone well. But suddenly things were no longer going well. The bearded man was stiff, and his face had grown hard and ugly. "Earth!" he swore harshly.

Sam hesitated, but it was too late to turn back. His hand lay near the butt of his gun as he moved forward. "Hi, Dad. Sure, we're from Earth. But we don't want to recruit any of your kids. We just need a little help to get us on our way. All we need is a ship or a chance to use your ultrawave set. Earth will make it worth your while."

"Earth!" The heavy-bodied woman spat on the ground, hunched her shoulders, and started moving forward. "I've been on planets where Earth had been, ramrod! Save your lies. You're not leaving to bring Earth ships here. You're under ar-

rest—you and the other two lying parasites, too."

Sam's hand streaked downward for his gun, and Paul braced himself for a blow at the older man.

Then a shrill whistling cut through the air, piercing and louder than any human lips could emit. Lumbering across the field at a deceptive speed was a huge Xanthol, with the red-headed man lagging behind. More men were running toward them from the buildings, some of them armed with guns. The Xanthol didn't wait for help, however, apparently willing to risk the small chance of a fatal hit. The thing slewed to a halt before Sam, sticking out a hand.

"Give me the gun, Earthman," he ordered. "If you don't, they'll sieve you. This is neutral territory, and you're interned."

"You damned maggots and snakes can't—!" Sam's hand had clenched around the butt of the gun, and hate had made his face darken almost to as deep a purple as that of the monster. But his words choked off, and his trigger finger slowly loosened.

The Xanthol plucked the gun away from him with a flicking motion and shoved it into a natural skin pouch under one arm. "Maggots and snakes, as you say," the thing agreed without any sign of annoyance. "Or as we say, people who get along together. Mike, do you think it's safe to stick them in your jail?"

"Don't reckon they'll break out, Kort."

"I don't mean that!" There was little doubt as to which of the two was the head "man" here.

Mike nodded. "Yeah, I get you. I guess we can keep them for a while. Most of the hotheads from the planets that got Earth's treatment are spread out in other villages, and they won't hear of these parasites for a while. But I ain't promising nothing, Kort."

"I'll think of something to do with them, maybe," the thing said doubtfully. Then its face contorted as it turned toward the prisoners. "Maybe I'll eat them. Oh, hell, lock 'em up and do the best you can, Mike."

There was no point in attempting resistance in front of the crowd that had collected. Some of the faces were ugly enough now to make the idea of confinement away from them almost welcome. Paul let them shove him onto a low motor cart, to drop down beside Pat and the hate-filled Meekings. He could hear Sam's breath over the sound of the motor—a taut, wrenching labor of chest and windpipe. Surprisingly, he found no obvious fear on Pat's face. She was studying the Xanthot among the crowd as the cart swung around, but it was puzzlement, not disgust that spread over her features.

Abruptly, she shook her head. "That big one! Kort—it made a sign—one used by the exilists," she said. "And at the right place, too. But it couldn't know!"

"It could," Paul told her. "Those things find out a lot about us from prisoners and spies. It might even be able to recognize you and try to soften you up for brainwashing. Don't trust it!"

The driver of the vehicle turned his face back, scowling. "You parasites shut up! I don't let my friends get talked about that way. I mean it."

Beyond the temporary field buildings, they passed through a good-sized village. Here bushes and trees grew thickly, and the buildings were low and painted to hide them from

the air. The people along the streets must not yet have heard of the prisoners, and paid little attention to the cart. Most of the inhabitants were human, but there were quite a few of the Xanthot moving casually along the streets. In one yard, a young Xanthol was playing with an Earth dog, barking at it in the dog's own voice. The animal acted no less happy than any other, though Paul had always supposed dogs couldn't stand the stench of the monsters. There seemed to be no zoning of humans and Xanthot.

Their identification was taken from them at the building which served as a jail, and they were herded into three separate cells, with Pat in the center. The cells were built of heavy wood, with the windows woven of poles that no man could break. But the locks on the doors were excellent pieces of factory construction and made of brass—though copper was so scarce on Earth that its use was confined to top-priority military needs. The bunks proved surprisingly comfortable, though Paul thought there was still a faint smell of Xantha use on his.

He surveyed things until he was sure there was no possible way to get out, and leaned back on the bunk. He was too tired to puzzle over a maggot world where Earthmen were hated and where a Xanthol could be called a friend, against all nature though that seemed. He couldn't even work up a good case of nerves. probably because some sort of battle fatigue seemed to have taken over since the capture of the mother ship. Besides, he'd learned to go to bed with misery often enough as a child. He heard Sam pacing about and testing the other cell, called softly through the door slit to Pat, and then went to sleep. Even the Xantha odor didn't bother him.

The odor was stronger when he awakened. It was night outside, but a fair illumination was provided by a small light emitter. He saw that a six-inch horizontal section of the door had been dropped, probably for ventilation, and through it he could see the greybeard and a big Xanthol —possibly Kort—just leaving. He turned over, trying to go back to sleep. Then a distant, incoherent series of yells reached his ears through the window. There was an ugly sound to it.

"What's that?" he called out to his jailer.

"Some of the hotheads, holding a meeting about you," the old man answered. He got up and came over, passing a tray of still-warm food through the slit in the door. "Here, I kept it for you. Like a man who can sleep instead of wasting time stewing about himself, even if he is a parasite. Why'd you land here."

"Couldn't help it," Paul told him. The food was excellent. He related a little of what had happened to the ship while the old man stood at the door. "What did we land in the middle of, anyway? Those rockets coming here and this *misva* thing you mentioned?"

Mike took out a cigarette, then passed one to the prisoner. "A custom you wouldn't understand. Most important of our organization. Once a year—standard year—we send off half our twenty-one-year-olds to other worlds, and get some of theirs in return. Keep things in balance and breaks up planetism. Like rotating crops. We've been doing it since we joined the Cooperation League, and it works fine. That name on your identity card—is it honestly yours?"

"Unfortunately, it is. Why?"

"Some of us were just curious. Pretty obvious the rest of the card was all lies. You're no civilian. Why'd you join up with Earth?"

"I was born there," Paul told him. "And in case you've all forgotten it here, so was the whole human race!"

"Yup. Nobody's forgotten. Human race was created in the sea, like other animals, but I don't see that means we have to swim back into it. You know, I kind of like you and your girl, even if her old man really is a government leech. Too bad the hotheads know about you. Maybe if they don't lynch you before morning, I'll try converting you. But I suppose they will, the way they're whooping it up."

He picked up the empty dishes and stacked them back on a cart. "Can't blame them. They were mostly rescued from planets where Earth's been conscripting the kids for military service and killing off anyone who won't join. Most of them remember some Earth ramrod shooting a relative. Nothing I can do to stop them."

"You might try putting a guard around the jail," Paul suggested.

Mike considered it, then shook his head. "Nope. Kort said he'd take you off my hands sometime, so it's up to him to worry about you. Some of your guys caught his dis-brother years ago and set fire to him. Took about two hours for him to burn to death. But you can't tell about Kort. He's been educated until he's hardly human."

The old man closed the cell door, then went away. A minute later Paul heard him leaving the building, locking up as he left. The outer door was heavy wood, but not one which could stand the determined efforts of even a small crowd. The distant yelling was louder now, blended with hoots and cries that could only come from a Xantha mouth. Paul tried to imagine what Earthmen might do if a few maggots were to land among them. Then he tried not to imagine it, which was harder.

He called out to Sam and got an answer, but they had nothing to say. The sergeant was still curled up inside his rage and fury. He must have disapproved of Paul's talking to Mike, and he should have been worried about the mob. But the only coherent thing he said had nothing to do with such matters.

"The Earth globe! I left the Earth globe behind, and I've got to get it back!"

Paul swore to himself. He'd seen such reactions before, but he couldn't understand it. It was *like* the accounts of the oldtime knights who died rescuing a flag from the enemy. Now, apparently, without the Dirac globe Sam was reduced to impotent rage and hopeless hate.

"Pat?" he called across to the third cell.

"I'm okay, Paul," she answered. "I guess I got the shakes a while back, but I'm all right now... Listen!"

He heard the mob sound almost at the same instant. The mob was moving, no longer arguing. There was a swelling of united angry voices come from a closer distance, as if the crowd were turning a corner and heading toward the jail. There was no undue haste, but the sounds grew steadily louder. Paul had never heard a lynch mob before, but the hairs along the nape of his neck were rising, telling his mind something his body had been born knowing. This was the hunting pack, already whipped to blood-lust, and he was at

bay!

Something flashed over his shoulder through the bars of the window. Paul ducked and felt cold sweat break out on his body, before he could realize it hadn't been meant for him. A blob of soft plastic flipped precisely over the light emitter, spreading out and leaving only a dim glow in the room.

"Pssst!"

In the dim light, there was barely enough visibility to see a slim-built young man outside the window. One arm was motioning backwards. "You in there, get back against the far wall."

Then a shower of blinding sparks touched the window—a tiny controlled Xantha saw. The poles on the window smoldered and fell away almost at once, and the kid was turning to another cell. By the time Paul could get out, he found Pat already ahead of him, and they both lent a hand to help Sam. The kid motioned to a flat vehicle like the one that had brought them here.

"Earth?" Sam asked in a whisper.

The kid spat violently at the ground. "Don't you call me Earthman, you lousy stinking ramrod! Just you get up here and let's get out before they come back here and kill all of us."

The machine began to move almost silently down a tangle of little streets toward the landing field. There was almost no light, but the machine was going at full speed, as if the driver were used to driving without seeing where he was. Then they passed a faint glow from a dimmed emitter, and the kid handed back a scrap of paper. "Here's a map. When you can look at it, you'll see a route you can take by ship to where you'll be safe. Better take it—it's the only place you won't get lynched. And don't blame me for what I'm doing, or blab about it. I'd a lot rather help rip the guts out of the bunch of you!"

"Why rescue us then?" Pat asked.

"Because he asked me to, that's why. When a guy who's saved your whole blamed clan from being burned out by rotten parasite ramrods—" He stopped and tried to spit again. The cart wove madly, bumping against a low curb, before he regained control. "— When he asks you to do something, you do it, see? No matter what. If I didn't, my brother'd just about pull me to pieces. Now shut up. I got a knife and you strutting Earth and Xantha ramrods all make me sick!"

But he couldn't keep his own advice. He jerked his head vaguely east and west. "Xanth! Earth! We had 'em both, back and forth, right across Piedmont's Planet. Two million of us when it started. Less'n fifty altogether when he rescued us. You just shut up, I tell you!"

Paul felt himself shiver, though the night was warm. The kid came from a world in Sector Twenty-Seven. A commission had visited the world to quash ugly rumors, and Paul had gone along as one of the clerks. He hadn't completely forgotten the evidence he'd seen in the brief time before the commission was pressed back by Xantha advances. But he'd always assumed that the atrocities were mostly by Xanth. Obviously, the kid blamed Earth as well.

He was very careful to remain silent as the kid suggested.

They reached the edge of the landing field. There was a light at one end, or it would have been completely dark in the moonless night, and

the faint forms of men could be seen moving the ships on dollies toward some underground hangar. That must account for the fact that maggot planets never seemed to have enough ships to carry on the exchanges they had to make. The ships were mostly tiny, easily hidden, and hard to track because their spies must keep them posted on battle lanes and times, leaving them free to travel in swarms at intervals. But their chief safety lay in their unimportance for anything except desperately needed spies.

Sam came to life suddenly, as if he hadn't believed anything until then. Without waiting for the kid to stop, he leaped off the cart and headed toward the lifeboat. Paul swore, but followed, drawing Pat with him, while the kid swung back into the night. The sergeant passed a dozen ships, all probably well fueled and simple enough for them to use. He made straight for the little boat, dragged the port open, and darted for the Dirac globe.

Paul stopped outside the port, trying to select a better ship. Then a light stabbed out and barely missed him. Some alarm had been tripped. With a lunge, he was up the tiny ramp, closing the port with Pat's help.

"You damned fool!" he shouted at the sergeant. "Now we've got to take off in this hulk!"

"I had to get the Globe. No Earthman can leave that for the maggots," Sam said flatly. His logic was so unshakable that he couldn't even feel irritation at its being questioned. "All right, the engine's ready. Take off!"

Pat had the little map spread out above the control panel, and she pointed in the direction indicated. There was no time for nice figuring of a minimum orbit. They skidded in a rough turn under power as Paul slapped the switch down, then burst upward violently, heading in the general direction she had pointed. She screamed from the pressure of nearly four-gees, but as it eased, she went back to the map. He stole a quick glance at it. It was obviously hand-drawn, but almost mechanical in its precision, with enlarged details of landmarks as seen far above the surface. The route led about a thousand miles across the globe.

"Desert, then a valley with a low mountain above it, more desert, and a big, bowl-like dip, with a rock pile in the middle," she summed it up. "That's our destination, about a hundred miles from the line marked *sunrise*. Can you find it?"

It was a better map than many on which whole battles had been based, but he wasn't the best navigator in the universe. Still, he seemed to be headed right. There was the first blush of dawn already, and he could see desert below. Later, he came to the indicated valley and corrected his course slightly as he spotted the mountain. This world had seemed to be three-quarters desert from three thousand miles above it; now, at no more than fifty miles, the desert was a patchwork of sand and large oases. Finally, they were passing over unbroken desert again, just as the sun seemed to touch the edge of the world toward which they were heading. Moments later and far ahead he saw the shadow of the depression that was the destination. In full daylight, he might have missed the big rocky rise near its center, but the map detail showed it by early morning light, and he located the shadows drawn for it.

He dropped lower, braking against the pounding resistance of denser air. A hasty glimpse of Sam showed the man worrying over the diminishing fuel, but there was no time for an accurate check. The lifeboat dropped, heating savagely. First the walls grew warm, then hot, and the air inside the boat was scorching. For a brief time, though, men could stand oven temperature, as long as the air was dry and they were not in direct contact with anything too hot; here the floor and heavy control panel were of insulating material.

He was still going too fast, but he'd made up his mind to risk one maneuver. He slapped on power again and kicked at the controls, wrenching the lifeboat upwards. It leaped in a great curve, straightened, and then began to fall back tail-first as he reduced the power.

Sam slapped his hands together to indicate the last of the boron fuel. But there had to be some left in the ignition chamber. Or enough for one cycle of plasma in the tube itself. As the ground came hammering toward them, Paul hit the switch for the final time. At full thrust, the tube bellowed against the thick air, faltered, let out one last growl, and was still.

The lifeboat came down about five more feet, hit, and settled with almost no bounce into the sand.

Now the heat was unbearable. Sam yanked up the globe, yelping as its cage burned against his arm, threw the port release, and jumped free. Pat leaped behind him, and Paul tumbled over on top of her, filling his mouth with the dry sand.

He felt Sam's hand helping him up. The globe was sitting on a moist spot, cooling down in clouds of steam. The Dirac projection had exactly the temperature of Earth itself, but the cage was normal berytanium alloy.

"Looks like you made it," Sam said. "I thought we were gone for sure. I wonder how long it'll be before we get picked up."

"Picked up by whom?"

"Earth. Some agent here, I guess," Sam answered positively.

"I thought it might be the Xanthol called Kort," Pat guessed.

Sam hooted in disgust, but Paul considered it. Then he shrugged. He couldn't see how Earth could maintain any agents here who would be safe enough to risk their mission to save a group of supposedly unimportant people. Even Kort seemed a more reasonable answer, though that idea had become untenable when the kid had begun ranting against both Xanthol and Earthmen. The best answer he could find was that Mike might have decided to save them, after all, but had been forced to make it seem that he was unconnected with the rescue. Paul tried to state his reasons to the others. Sam wasn't convinced, but a trace of doubt appeared.

"Anyhow, if it's going to be much longer, we'd better find some shade," Paul suggested. The rocks here rose to a peak further back, but right here there was a gentler rise on each side of a cleft that seemed to wind back into either a cave or an enclosed and shaded spot.

Sam nodded, but moved to the hot ship, testing it. Then he found it cool enough, apparently, and jumped through the port and began fussing with the ranging device.

"There used to be an emergency switch on these things..." he called back. "Ah, there it is. Turns the whole thing into a distress signal

transmitter. Probably the wrong frequency. No use taking chances if either of you are right and it turns out not to be an Earth agent."

Pat frowned, but Paul could see no harm in it. It might not reach any Earth patrol—it would depend on whether they ran jumps over this sector. Or it might attract a Xantha ship, but he couldn't believe the Xanthot would bother too much about any underpowered Earth distress signal.

Besides, this might all prove to be a trick. The whole rescue could be nothing but an elaborate hoax, designed to put them here and keep them waiting with fading hopes while the heat and lack of supplies killed them far more unmercifully than a crowd might have done. In that case, anything that offered the faintest chance must be tried.

The sun was rising higher. They began moving back into the gulley, a few feet at first, then all the way, until it ended in a flat surface of rock under a narrow ledge. But it would give shade enough until afternoon. Thirst was a more immediate problem. Sandy desert around them created a feeling that they should be dying of thirst, and their bodies tried to fit the idea.

The mechanical tick of the transmitter went on steadily for almost an hour. At the end of that time, a brilliant red flash lanced out. Paul started for it, but Sam caught his sleeve with the hand not holding the globe. "Stay here and duck down! I'd forgotten about some things. She's gonna—"

She blew before he could finish. The explosion battered them back against the wall behind them, while small bits of the lifeboat rained down just beyond them. Obviously, the older designs had an explosive of high efficiency connected to a time switch.

"Supposed to hold it down when signalling," Sam explained "Had one demonstrated when I was a rookie, but I forgot. That's in case it gets into the wrong hands. Must have been in bad shape or it wouldn't have taken so long. Well, I guess that boat wasn't much good, anyhow. Still looking for help from the snake, lady?"

She had been staring down the gulley, but she shook her head doubtfully. "I suppose not. I guess Paul is right, and the kid hated Xanthot as much as Earthmen. But—"

"But we don't call anyone human or Xanthol here, Miss Obanion," a voice called down above them. "Just people."

The Xanthol came down the face of the rocks, his pad-like feet gripping the stone firmly and silently. "Sorry I was delayed, but I had to hold back the crowd for your escape, and it took some time breaking away quietly. Then, too, my hangar is some distance from here. Welcome to my private retreat."

Sam's hand was clawing at the empty holster. Then it dropped, and he stood stolidly, making no move as the creature came down beside them. The sergeant's breath was snarling harshly in his throat again, and his eyes seemed glazed. But he wasn't fool enough to try tackling the big creature barehanded. One Xanthol could easily destroy a dozen men without straining itself.

Pat's face was also white and there was blood on her lip where she had bitten herself. But she curtsied elaborately. "I take it we're in time for lunch?"

"Very well done, Miss Obanion."

The thing threw back its upper trunk like a man tossing his head, and there was no falsity to its laughter. "And I'm sure you'd be delicious. But in spite of mutual horror tales, we'd be poison to each other. We're both completely omnivorous races—but only within our own protoplasmic background."

He moved past them and touched a concealed lever. The rock wall slid apart to show an artificial cave, obviously of several rooms. The main room was furnished in a mixture of human and Xanth products. He bowed like a tree bending in the wind. "I bid my guests welcome."

"If I had a gun..." Sam muttered thickly.

Kort stared at him carefully. "I could remove that hypnotic background of hate," he said. "But I suppose you've grown into it by now. No, Sam, you wouldn't kill me. You couldn't cross this desert without help, and you couldn't even eat the food I stock. Even the so-called neutral food we use for prisoners and which I've provided would poison you unless it's specially treated, and you don't know how to do that. Besides, why kill me? I've been a deserter from Xanth for longer than you've served Earth. Now, what would you do with your gun."

Sam licked his lips. Somewhere inside him, a battle was being fought between training and reason. But he was not entirely a fool. He finally nodded reluctantly. "Some day—"

"Someday, but not now. Here." Kort drew the gun from his natural pouch and handed it to Sam. "It's still loaded. It probably wouldn't kill me anyhow, and I'd have to do something drastic about you if you tried." He grinned suddenly as Sam holstered the gun. "And now, just what in hell am I going to do with you?"

"We're at the friendly pleasure of our host," Paul told him. This was all a bit too urbane for his taste, but he saw no other way to handle it.

Kort strode across the room, toward a small medallion on the wall. There was a plastic bubble centered in it, and within that was a tiny globular jewel, shining brightly. Around it, in the m e t a l that seemed to be gold, lay lettering in English.

"Perhaps this is doubly appropriate now," he suggested, handing it over.

The letters were in an antique script, but Paul puzzled them out slowly.

MINE HOST, MINE ADVERSARY

"Your host, you see, but possibly not your friend," the creature said quietly. "I'm no friend of any avowed Earthman. No friend to *any* parasite of other hosts."

Pat took the medallion and turned it over and over, holding it as only a woman could hold jewelry. "What happened to the woman who wore it?" she asked.

For a second, Paul thought the thing was going to strike her, and braced himself for a useless charge against it. Then the whole torso lifted in a monstrous shrug.

"I carved and created that myself, Miss Obanion," Kort said, with no trace of emotion in his careful words. "For a very great man, the one who first understood and taught me to understand that motto. It was my singular honor to have it returned to console me on the death of my disbrother. You'll find rooms in the rear. Please consider them yours. Dinner will be at seven."

The Xanthol replaced the medallion on the wall, then moved toward

a side door. There was the click of a lock after it, and they were left alone.

Paul almost regretted the creature's absence. At least it had given him something to talk to. Pat was dead with fatigue, and Sam was nursing darkly at some thoughts of his own. They went to the back, seeking their rooms, while Paul stayed. The place was interesting as he prowled around, but the novelty wore off in an hour. He moved past the room where Pat was asleep, past Sam's, where the man was slumped over his gun, staring at the globe. He tried the outer door, finding it unlocked. The heat was oppressive on the desert now, and there was nothing to see, except that the sand had drifted under a defiant wind to cover the wreck of their little boat.

He found books on the wall, mostly in Xanthii. The English ones were hardly fascinating. There was a cryptic bunch of reasonable Earth policy material and senseless garbage by someone named Hitler, an antique and worn book entitled in faded letters by another unknown named Spengler. He thought that was about space, at first, but soon realized it dealt only with some mystical fears about Earth. Finally, a thin little volume appealed to him more. Even the title, *Lays of Ancient Rome,* awakened a response, as if it had been read by him long ago. Most of it kept jogging his memory, but he found it good reading, apparently not related to the nonsense of the others.

He puzzled over it, staring at the three books until he heard Kort come from his private quarters. The Xanthol managed to make one of his imitation smiles look almost thoughtful as he drew up to the table. "I heard you moving about and thought you might be upset. I have some old drugs from Earth ship, and thought some were sleeping pills. Take them."

Paul took the box and put it into his pocket after a glance. He wasn't sure himself whether the color codes on the capsules were for barbiturates or not; it wasn't standard. But it didn't matter.

"What's all this junk in the books?" he asked.

"All dealing with secondary characteristics of the s o c i a l—ecological relationship expressed in the medallion I showed you," he said. "The books in Xanthii are similar, though I suppose you can't read them. No matter. They're all steps toward the medallion for those who are willing to hunt for the relationships. I was hoping you might study them."

The peculiar emphasis placed on the jewel puzzled Paul. He stared across to the wall where it hung. "I've been wondering about that thing. You call us parasites, so I suppose you could be using *host* in a similar biological sense—something giving shelter or nourishment to a parasite. But in that case, you've got it all backwards. It's the parasite who's the enemy."

"Is it? Perhaps you do yourself an injustice. Suppose it applies between us, but also has other meanings."

"Then I'd say your host who is an enemy could be one only because the guest didn't know it. That doesn't apply here."

"Very good, Paul Weinblum." Kort nodded emphatically. "Ignorance is the root of the danger, perhaps. And you approach some truth. Now find what unknown enemies may be among hosts, and the danger might be avoided. Or at least the

great danger would be ended, and ended soon. But enough of that. Your history and literature are rich in hosts that bent their guests toward ruin. Look at the land of Israel."

"What about it? It produced one of our greatest religions, some incredible riches for our culture—"

"Sure, its people did. They did whenever they were not in the land for which they yearned. They were peasants, Paul. Then they were driven from Israel to Babylon—and off their land, they grew to greatness. They returned, suckled the land, and grew to perhaps a million or two peasants and fishers again. Then, kicked away from their host-country, they swelled to twenty times that number and began producing scholars, sages, scientists—the men other races should have been producing in like quantities. Or look to your religion. Who was the devil?"

Paul scowled, looking for the answer. In the back of his head, something stirred uncomfortably. Someone else had argued like this once, long ago—someone close to him—Then he shrugged. "All right, I'll bite. Who?"

"The opposite of God, of course," Kort said. "God gave men duties that were hard, and kept them on the jump. But the devil went about offering ease and comfort, a settled life, for nothing—nothing, that is, but the soul. And there is the great lesson to be learned from all literature. The host demon comes in many forms, but the greatest form must be treated by analogy." He waited expectantly, then went on. "We have host stories in our legends, too, Paul. Care to hear one?"

This time it was a long and rambling account, obviously given by direct translation, about a beggar who was taken in by a rich man. And at first the beggar throve and grew strong. Each day he received some new thing, and each day he put off moving on. And then there came a day when he tried, but could not tear himself free from all his pride and his possessions. And he was suddenly afraid that another beggar mighty appear and demand a share. So he secretly hired assassins through intermediaries, ordering them to kill all the beggars in the land. This they did, dutifully. And among those beggars was himself.

"A nice fable. But too obvious."

Kort sighed and stared down at him. Finally there was a massive shrug. "Your father didn't think so, Paul Weinblum."

"My father thought too much," Paul said bitterly. "Maybe that's what made him a traitor. Or so they told me."

"He wasn't a traitor, Paul."

The muscles on Paul's neck clenched almost shut, and his voice was dragged up and out of him as he stumbled to his feet, "What do you know of my father?"

"That he was a very great man," the creature answered. "It was here he came, not to Xanth, as Earth believed." The Xanthol turned to leave.

Paul caught Kort by a rough arm, trying to drag the being around. "Then prove it, damn you. Show me his grave!"

"He isn't dead, Paul."

"Then—then where...?"

Kort sighed. "He's on Earth now, working on a weapon for the humans," he said. Then he was through the door, locking it behind him. But the final words had been spoken in the voice of Paul's father, as if to prove his acquaintance.

Paul was shaking when he finally abandoned his attempts to batter down the door. He shouted until his voice seemed to grow thin. Sam must have led him back to a room, but he was only vaguely aware of it as he dropped onto the bed.

A cheap trick. Brainwashing! He repeated it over and over to himself, hunting for the steps that Kort must have taken to get him ready for the blows to his senses. It had to be a trick, though it seemed senseless.

He tossed himself over, feeling the box of pills in his pocket. After a few more minutes, he drew them out with trembling fingers and forced himself to swallow four that might be sleeping pills. He'd have taken them if he'd known they were poison at the moment. His father—it had been his father who'd asked him questions long ago like those of Kort!

Then the drug began to work, but there was no sleep in it. There was a growing haze of a weird euphoria. It must have been an indoctrination drug, and he'd taken an overdose. But now it was funny. Kort had tricked him, and that was funny, too. His mind hunted down every word of the conversation, aching and dwelling in gleee over it. It was good to hate one's own father and to miss him, to be ashamed to face other children, to cringe before his own name and to accept every dirty routine job. It was nice to be a parasite, to suckle off a host that was blind and deaf and drunk and lived in a little bubble on the wall. It was nice to be the host to a monster like Kort, who could twist a man's brains out and who loved little children on the half shell. It was amusing to sit here crying his eyes out.

He tried to get up and shake it off, knowing in the back of his mind that he was still sick and miserable, and hating himself. But the drug seemed to have ruined his sense of balance.

Brainwashing was good for one—and someday, he'd kill himself because he liked being converted to the Xanthot so much!

Pat came in, staring at him as he mouthed words he couldn't hear, and went out. When she came back, she stank of Xantha hide and was wearing a mottled patch of red on each arm, above her newly torn and broken nails. But she was also carrying food and something like coffee.

After that, he couldn't remember anything until he awoke in the morning with the world's worst thirst. It took half an hour before he could get himself moving again.

Nevertheless, he felt surprisingly well. Both the anguish and the euphoria were gone. He shook his head ruefully. He'd brought it on himself. He should have remembered what he'd learned in the Earth forces about the Xanthot. They were still savage enough to delight in torture and deceit.

There was breakfast on the table, and he found he was hungry.

Sam was standing by the big outer door, holding it a trifle ajar, as if sampling the morning air. He turned a doubtful glance toward the younger man.

"Man, you had a jag on! Last I heard, you thought you were a brass-bound basketball, all set to gobble up everything alive. We had a time holding you down. How do you feel?"

"Empty," Paul told him truthfully. The coffee was making him feel more normal—and normal was a weak word; the after effects of the drug

were better than normal now. It must have been a sort of psychic catharsis, like the rare, successful binges that justified all the other stupid drinking.

"Lemme see your tongue," Sam said. His voice tensed, and Paul looked up to see the man's hand shaking. Without thinking, he opened his mouth. Instantly, a faint whisper came from the sergeant's slit lips. "There's a ship overhead. I caught a couple flashes of sunlight. Get ready if it's rescue."

"Looks all right to me," he said aloud. "Better wake Pat up before she sleeps all day."

There had to be something wrong with the whole business, Paul felt. It couldn't be that easy. Or could it? If they were lucky enough to have reached an Earth ship within range, and if it took the risk of landing here, maybe it could be that easy. But if it turned out to be Xanthot—openly hostile ones, instead of whatever Kort was...

Pat was already half awake, apparently responding to the sound of her door. But he made a great fuss about arousing her while he passed the message.

Her eyes searched his, as if looking for something that shouldn't be there, and she blushed. But she got up readily enough, brushing some of the wrinkles from her short skirt.

It came to Paul suddenly that she was their only ace in the hole. If they had any difficulty in getting to a decent section of the galaxy, her father's money and power would turn the trick. It might not work where Earth' intrigues and heavy pride were involved, but it would be effective in the outdistricts.

He cursed inside himself. He'd be selling his own soul to the devil at this rate. Or maybe he had never owned a soul. But until now, Pat had been simply one of them as far as he was concerned. Now at the first approach of a possible Earth force, he was weighing her value like a piece of merchandise.

Something roared heavily outside, and the ground shook to the braking blast of a rocket. Paul let out a yell of relief from the waiting, and began dashing after Pat. They had a few yards to cover before they reached the door, and they had to reach it before Kort got there. Once outside, maybe they could reach the ship. But they should have been ready when the landing came.

They dashed out of the hallway, to see Sam already gone, and the Xanthol standing in the main room!

Kort paid no attention to them. He leaped for something on fasteners over the door. The first time his hands grasped it but could not break the straps. He tried again, ripping it down with him and beginning to tear a protective cover from it. Paul saw that it was a Xantha weapon, big enough to blast a ship to bits. They had failed before they could start.

The odd part was that Paul couldn't seem to care. Inside his mind, something seemed to feel nothing but relief at the end of their hopes of a return to Earth. He—

Kort let out a huge bellow and dropped the half-freed weapon. "Sam! Sam, don't be a damned fool! They'll kill you!"

Paul saw the Xanthol disappear through the door and ran after him down the curving gully toward the desert beyond.

Ahead of them, Sam had reached the very edge of the surrounding rocks and was starting toward the Earth ship that had landed nearly a

mile away. Three uniformed men—Earth regulars—were already moving across the sand.

Sam yelled and started running toward them.

One of the men lifted a gun and fired deliberately at him. The bullet missed, but a shot for a second man clipped across his arm, sending him staggering. The sergeant's face was a mask of horrible shock, and he was yelling steadily, crying his serial number, waving one wrist gauntlet at the men who carried the mark of Earth. A better-aimed bullet caught him in the groin, and another ricocheted against the metal plate in his head. He started to fall, the gun he had finally drawn flopping uselessly in his hand.

Kort leaped ten feet across the remaining distance and gathered Sam into his arms. There was a yell from the Earth force, but little time for anything else. One of the Xanthol's hands was over the gun that Sam still held, and three shots rang out.

It was fantastic shooting. Even before they dropped, Paul knew that all three men were dead.

Kort motioned Pat and Paul to him, drawing the gun gently out of the limp fingers. "Take him inside, do what you can. I'll be back as soon as I take care of that ship and see that there are no others."

His huge form went lurching across the sand, monstrously graceful as he doubled the best speed any human could make. He was zig-zagging as he ran, but there was no fire from the ship.

They dragged Sam inside as gently as they could, stripped him and began trying to staunch the flow of blood. It didn't look good.

The groin wound was probably high enough to have entered the abdomen, and Sam had been twisting backward when it hit. There might be internal bleeding, even if Kort had drugs to kill any infection. Once the man regained partial consciousness.

"They get the snake?"he asked.

"Sure. Sure, Sam," Paul told him automatically.

"Good. Crazy to get in their way." The man muttered again, but it was indistinct. Then he passed out.

Pat exchanged a bitter glance with Paul, but she said nothing. Sam believed in what he believed. And it was hard enough for anyone—even one who had seen it—to credit the evidence of his eyes in that little battle. The Earthmen had been shooting to hit Sam, and they had deliberately neglected Kort for their purpose.

From outside, t h e r e was the screaming blast of a ship, and a few minutes later Kort came in. He found antiseptics and antibiotics he thought might be safe, then stood by while they tried to make the sergeant comfortable.

"I've sent their ship off on automatics with the bodies," he reported. "If they're found, it will be late enough that they can't be tracked—I hope."

He sighed again. "So much blood must be wasted soon! Why should this little more be needed now?"

"You knew they'd shoot him. I heard you warn him," Paul said harshly. "Why?"

The Xanthol led them out into the mainroom, staring darkly at the medallion on the wall. He nodded. "Yes I knew what they would do. But I was too late to protect my guest. That is a thing I cannot forgive."

"How." Pat asked. "How did you know?"

"I've been studying the effects of Earth and Xanth for most of my life, Miss Obanion," he said heavily. "With the help of all the spies Earth and Xanth have believed to be working for them. I knew of the system of messengers before you did, Paul. That's why I knew they had orders to kill any of you who had escaped from the ship."

"I don't see—" Paul began. But he *was* beginning to see, and the ugliness of the sight sickened him. He reached without conscious volition for Pat's hand, squeezing it for stability. She drew closer to him, reading his need.

One of the Xanthol's big hands came to rest gently on each of their heads. "Sit down," Kort told them. "And listen carefully, because you won't like what I say, so I won't repeat it."

He paused, then shrugged. "Paul, all those messages—all the thousands of ships with their sacrifices—were only a false move to trap Xanth. There was no real message to carry. They wanted it to look like a massive attempt to get word through—and that meant having spies give the take-off lists to Xanth. If enough were caught and tortured, Xanth might believe the pattern of Earth's message, blaming the lack of sense on the parts they thought omitted. So when Earth found you had escaped—I suppose you had a transmitter—when they heard that, they had to act as if what you carried was so precious that they couldn't risk even a live rescue of you. I'd have mysteriously managed to escape with the news, to tell of the care they took to destroy the words you carried, of course."

The ugly part of it was that it fitted. The men sent out on the ships—except for Sam, who was a true volunteer—had all been people Earth distrusted or could do without. They wanted Pat killed without angering her father, they were happy to hope the son of the other Paul Weinblum might die. It had taken too little time for the Xanthot to catch the ship. And the lifeboat had passed inspection without any supplies, so that it had no chance of reaching an Earth base.

Paul stomped into the room where Sam lay breathing stertorously. He came back with the Dirac globe, propped it on a shelf, and stood studying it. It was a beautiful thing outside—but a pearl of loveliness is only the sickness of an oyster.

"Kort," he asked, "could a human join Xanth?"

Pat gasped in protest, but Kort merely shrugged heavily. "You don't mean that, Paul."

"No," he admitted at last. "No, God help me, I don't."

"God help you indeed," Kort agreed. "Xanth is no better than Earth. The same disease, the same symptoms. Without the jealousy of both, the war would die of its own evil. But it will not die, and the sacrifices go on. My dis-brother was killed by torture at the hands of Earthmen; but it was the Xanthot who deliberately sent him out to be killed, knowing what would happen. They are no different, son."

"Then both should be wiped out of the galaxy," Paul swore, and this time Pat made no protest.

But Kort shook his head. "No. No, Paul. They should be saved. But we have no time and not enough skill to save them. So they must be killed, as you say, before they can kill all the other planets in their death strug-

gles. That is all we can do."

For the moment, at least, Kort's hint of treason to his world was firmer than Paul's, but he could not mean it more. He'd spoken treason—and he still meant it.

"Like father, like son," he said at last.

Kort nodded gravely. "We hope so. The outland humans need a leader—or they will. That's why—"

The Dirac globe blossomed into flame. There was no sound, but fire bloomed out five feet from the casing, dancing madly in mixed colors for perhaps five seconds. Then the flame died out. The casing still stood, but the globe within it was gone without a trace. The room shimmered with heat that was gone almost as soon as it had appeared. Paul leaped for the casing, to find it barely warm and uninjured.

Kort was no longer standing. He had sunk onto a bench before the table, and his head was wilted across his crossed arms. His breath labored and fought. And then he laughed, a sound that no man could make.

"I can do everything a man can. I can do everything but cry! There are no tear ducts. And I am less than the most miserable human who ever lived in my needs. Cry a little for me —Pat, Paul. While I break inside, cry for Earth now and for Xanth to come. That was Earth, and Earth is no more."

Paul's hand lay in the empty casing, unbelieving. "That happened to Earth? It wasn't just a projector failure?"

"It happened as you saw it. The Zeta-transformation. We gave it to both Earth and Xanth, warning them of forces that might wipe them out in destroying the other. But their pride was too great to believe their planets could end. Earth is gone."

It seemed impossible to accept, even though Paul believed the creature. Earth—no matter what Earth had done, this couldn't happen to *Earth!*

A hoarse scream pulled their gaze to the door. Sam stood there, braced against the doorjamb, staring at the globe casing. Now he pushed himself upright and away from all support. Fresh blood was spilling from his groin, and his grey face looked incapable of life. A sheet was wrapped around him like a toga, and it dragged on the floor as he moved forward. In one hand was a tiny, ineffective pocket knife, its four-inch blade open and glittering.

He moved slowly to the shelf where the casing stood, then turned to face the Xanthol.

"You!" His voice was only a whisper. "You filthy snakes! That was Earth!"

His wooden, wabbling legs carried him one step forward, then another. The knife came up, while Kort sat waiting without making any attempt to move away, as if begging the man to succeed in the hopeless vengeance.

Then the legs collapsed, spinning the sergeant about in his tangled sheet. The hand came up, and he fell on it, driving the short blade through his throat. He gasped once, then lay still, sprawled out in an attitude of prayer before the empty cage that had held the image of Earth.

Pat stepped forward, and then drew back. There was something about the pose that denied them the right to disturb the body immediately. To the best of his ability, Sam Meekings lay before the ashes of his fathers and the altars of his gods; and his name was no better or worse than that of Horatius.

Finally Kort gathered the poor body up and carried it back gently out of sight, while Paul remained buried in the tangle of his thoughts.

"My father—," he began when Kort returned. "You said he was on Earth. Was that a lie, or is he—?"

"Your father is dead now," Kort told him. "He went back—disguised and smuggled in—to set up the Zeta-transformation device. He loved Earth, Paul, even though he loved all people more. He had to go, and we could not stop him."

The wall blazed with a pinpoint of light that spread outwards from the medallion. It was smaller than the flame from the globe, but unmistakably the same. Then it faded, leaving the medallion with its plastic bubble, but without the jewel that had given it life. That jewel had been a Dirac projection tinier than any tried on Earth, and it could only have been the image of Xanth!

Kort drew the medallion from the wall with gentle fingers. "Xanth," he said. "My early host, my eternal adversary. But it's gone with Earth now, not eternal after all. One by design and one by backlash, and who can say which killed the other?"

He placed the bauble in his pouch and seated himself, staring at the bare wall. But he must have known Xanth would follow Earth, since his face showed no further sign of shock.

Paul felt the thoughts churning again in his head, and could almost make the pattern they seemed to be seeking. Then the mists in is mind seemed to recede, leaving him with a sharp knowledge too new to understand yet.

The hosts were gone—the worlds that had taken life in and suckled it, had given it everything, and sent it out among the stars without ever quite letting go their claim on it. The hosts that had filled life with pride and greed for security, hatred and jealousy that others might try to steal such a treasure. With all the worlds of the cosmos, the race had not dared give up what it had for what it might gain, and it had been sure that every other race must want what it had, too. The hosts that had suckled a beggar clan that sent out orders to kill all beggars who might make claim on those hosts.

"Mine host, mine adversary," he repeated softly. "Mine ancient heritage, mine own. My bondage and my fear."

"Or any place where a man may mistake fixed roots for security," Kort said quickly, and a sudden spark came back to his eyes. "Paul, you'll work with us now to keep other such hosts from ever becoming life's adversaries. You'll have your father's notes and friends—and more work than any generation can finish."

Paul nodded, reaching for Pat's hand and heading for the outer door.

They were still standing there when the quick rotation of the planet brought night again. Paul looked up at the stars and galaxies that ran through the heavens toward infinity. The universe pulled at them, as it had always pulled at all men. But in Paul's mind, under the sudden flash of full revelation, he was seeing more. Beside him, Pat drew closer, as if sharing his thoughts. They stood staring at a universe that had somehow taken in life and nurtured and sheltered it!

"Mine host, mine adversary," he whispered.

Some day, surely, they would conquer even that.


Virgil
Finlay

condemned to death

by POUL ANDERSON

IN ITSELF, the accident was ridiculous. The damage could have been repaired in a week or so. There would have been no permanent harm to anything except pride.

But because it happened where it did, Fleet Captain Nils Kivi took one look at his instruments and read death.

"Jesu Kristi!" Vibrations of impact and shearing still toned in the metal around him. Weightlessness, as the ion blast flamed and died, was like being pitched off a cliff. He heard a wail that was escaping air, then the clash of an automatic bulkhead sealing off the pierced section. None of it registered, except remotely. His entire self was speared on the needle of the radiation meter.

A second he hung there. His mind returned to him. He grabbed a stanchion and yanked himself to the control console. His finger pushed the intercom button. He said, "Abandon ship!" in a gasp that was amplified to a roar.

The drill had not been carried out for a long time, but his body drowned panic in adrenalin and he went through efficient motions. One hand slipped free the spool of data tape from the auto-pilot and stuck it in a pocket of his coverall. (He even recollected reading somewhere that the captain of a foundering ocean vessel on Earth, long ago, had always taken the log with him.) His foot shoved vigorously against a recoil chair, sent him arrowing toward the bridge door with a slight spin which he corrected by slapping a wall. Once out in the corridor, he pulled himself hand over hand until the rungs he grasped at seemed blurred with his speed.

Others joined him from their posts of duty, a dozen men with faces

hardened against fear. Some had already entered the ferry, which was now to be a lifeboat. Kivi could hear its generators whine, building up potentials. He hung aside, letting his men stream through the linked airlocks. Engineer Abdul Barang was last. Kivi followed him in, asking: "Do you know what happened? Something seems to have knocked out the atomics."

"A heavy object. Ripped through the deck from the after hold, into the engine room, and out the side." Barang looked savage. "Loose cargo, I am certain."

"The colonial—"

"Svoboda? I don't know. Are we waiting for him? He may already have killed us!"

Kivi nodded. "Strap in," he called, unnecessarily, for the men were finding their places. Barang sped aft to take over the power plant from whoever had had the presence of mind to start it going. Kivi went to the pilot board at the head of the passenger section. His fingers flew, adjusting the harness. Each instant he delayed, death sleeted through his body. "Call off!" he said, heard the names and knew the tally was full. He got settled and punched the airlock controls. The boat valve started to close.

A final man burst through. He screamed in English: "Were you going to leave me there?"

Kivi, who understood him, replied coldly: "Why not? You are responsible for this."

"What?" Jan Svoboda sprawled in the aisle like an ungainly fish. The eyes of men raked him from their seats. "*I'm* responsible?" he choked. "Why, you self-righteous jackass, you personally agreed that—"

Kivi hit the launching button. The ship released the ferry; repulsors boosted the smaller hull free of the larger. Kivi didn't stop to take sights. Any direction is the best way out, when you are in the middle of hell. He simply crammed down the emergency manual lever. The boat rumbled and leaped. Svoboda, still in midair, was thrown back by the acceleration. He hit the after wall of the passenger section hard enough to crack its plastic. There he lay, pinned down, his face one mask of blood. Kivi wondered if the colonist's neck was broken. Almost, he hoped so.

Men finding places for themselves on the *Courier* made its passages buzz with their unease. Pulling himself along toward sickbay, Kivi threw out a bow wave of silence. Bad enough to be any master, losing any ship. But since old Coffin had so inexplicably resigned to join the settlers, Nils Kivi was in command of the entire fleet. The vessel lost was the *Ranger*, flagship of the other fourteen. In itself, that was not crucial, though God knew interstellar craft were few and precious. But a voyage of more than forty years at half light-speed lay ahead of them, from e Eridani back to the Solar System. Anything could become an obsession on such a trek, and destroy men. Surely an admiral who lost his flagship was a dark symbol.

Angrily, Kivi suppressed his own thoughts. He was a Finn, short and stocky, with high cheekbones and slightly oblique blue eyes. Normally he was a cheerful man, dapper and talkative. But now he was going to see Jan Svoboda.

He stopped his progress, opened a flimsy interior door, and pushed through into a cubbyhole that was

anteroom and doctor's desk space. Another person was just emerging from the sickbay chamber beyond. They bumped together and cartwheeled aside. For an instant, Kivi hung staring. When words came, they were idiotic: "But you are down on the planet."

Judith Svoboda shook her head. Loosened by the collision, her hair made a brown cloud about face and shoulders, with red gleams where it caught the light. She wore a plain coverall, whose bagginess in zero gravity did not hide all her trim figure. "I heard about the accident, and that Jan was hurt," she said. "The last ferry unloading the *Migrant* carried the word. Of course I hitched a ride upstairs again."

He had always liked women's voices to be low. Not that a spaceman saw many women in a lifetime. He roughened his own tones: "Who's the pilot? You made him violate four separate regulations."

"Have a heart," she pleaded. He was momentarily puzzled by the idiom. Anyone, he thought in a corner of himself, would have trouble understanding the English of these Constitutionalists. It was no longer an important language on Earth. Enough spacemen still used it so that Kivi's own knowledge paid off. But spacemen weren't very important on earth either.... "Jan is my husband," she said. "What else could I do?"

"Well." Kivi stared at a microfile of medical references. "Well. So you have just now seen him? How is he?"

"Better than I feared. He can get up soon— Up! Down!" she said bitterly. "What does that mean here?" With haste: "Why did you take off so fast, Nils? Jan said you gave him no time to strap in, even to grab hold of something."

He sighed in sudden weariness. "Are you too about to heap fire on me for that? I have heard enough of it from your husband, when he first regained consciousness. Spare me."

"Jan's been under strain," she said. "And then to be so shocked and hurt— Please don't blame him if he's intemperate."

Kivi jerked his head around, startled, to look at her. "Do you not accuse me?"

"I'm sure you had a good reason." Her smile was timid. "I just wondered what it might have been."

Kivi harked back to the days and the nights down on Rustum. He had come to know her, while spacemen and colonists worked together; he had seen her smeared with grease, wrench in hand, helping assemble a tractor, and he had seen her beneath green leaves and by the cold hurtling light of the moon Sohrab. Yes, he thought, she would give any man a chance to explain. Even a spaceman.

Heavily, he said: "We were in a radiation belt. We could not get away fast enough."

"Was it that intense? I mean, did absolutely every second count?"

"Perhaps I was hasty." Kivi must push those words out. Looking back, he could give himself no sound reason for having been prepared to abandon Svoboda on board the *Ranger*, and then for having blasted off so fast and hard he might well have killed the man. At the time, he had known only a whirl of hatred for the one who had wrecked them. And yet Svoboda was the husband of Judith and the father of two children, all of whom had spoken gently to Kivi.

It boiled up again within the cap-

tain. He snapped: "After all, had it not been for his carelessness, the situation would never have arisen."

The heartshaped face before him grew tense. "Is he actually responsible?" Judith replied, her tone become hostile. "He says you gave him permission to work on the cargo."

Kivi felt himself redden. "I did! But I had no idea he was going to unsling a piece as massive as—"

"You could have asked him exactly what he intended to do. How was he to know it could be dangerous?"

"I assumed he had a nomal amount of common sense. My mistake!"

A while they glared at each other. The tiny room grew very still. It was almost as if Kivi could sense the hollowness of this ship, empty holds, empty tanks, the vessel was a shell chained in orbit around Rostum. *So am I*, he thought. Then he remembered the nights at High America, when campfires leaped to tint this woman's face against a great windy rustling darkness. Once he and she had been alone for a few hours, walking along the Emperor River in search of a wild orchard he had found on the first expedition, some ninety years ago. It hadn't been any notable adventure, only sunlight, bright water flowing beside them, glimpsed birds and animals. They hadn't even talked much. But he could not forget that day.

"I'm sorry," said the captain. "Doubtless he and I were both at fault."

"Thanks." Judith caught his hand between her own.

Presently she asked: "What did happen? I'm all confused about it. The ferry pilot said one thing, and Jan another, and they speak about poison belts and none of it makes sense to me. Do you know yourself what the truth is?"

"I believe so. I shall have to inspect the derelict, but everything seems clear enough." Kivi grimaced. "Must I explain?"

"No. I wish you would, though."

"Well, then—"

Ten ships of the fleet carried about 3000 colonists. The remaining five bore approximately half that many spacemen. All adults of both groups took turns standing one-year watches during the voyage from Sol, tending sleepers and ships. Each vessel held cargo necessary for the colony as well as for the fleet itself.

Having arrived, they took up orbit around Rustum, well beyond its radiation zones and measurable meteor hazards. First crew, then colonists were roused and taken down to High America. Thereafter, one by one, the ships were brought into low orbit, scarcely above the planet's atmosphere. Each spaceship carried a ferry: a rugged boat with retractible wings, using thermal rather than ion blasts and thus able to traverse air. Cargo followed the settlers, who went to work to get themselves established. The spacemen had their own jobs: unloading, ferrying, refining reaction mass down on the planet for their homeward journey. But this occupied a mere fraction of them; the rest were told off to help the colonists.

There were also a few settlers who must help the spacemen. Much of the cargo to be discharged was unfamiliar to astronauts: mining, agricultural, biological, analytic and synthesizing equipment. At mass ratios of nine to one, nothing could be conventionally crated and padded; it must all be transferred to the ferries piece by piece, under knowledgable

supervision. Otherwise something thermoplastic might get packed next to a heat shield, or a set of crystal standards get irradiated and ruined, or.... There weren't going to be any replacement parts from Earth, nor visitors, in this generation. Perhaps never, the way civilization back there seemed to be developing.

Having been an engineer with the Oceanic Minerals Bureau at home, Jan Svoboda was appointed one such supercargo. He was on the *Ranger*, the first to be unloaded of those five ships which had borne spacemen only. These had discharged their human contents immediately on arrival, remaining in high orbit; they were to come down now for removal of their inanimate cargo. Svoboda requested permission to start preparing the stuff for transfer to the ferries, during deceleration. Kivi agreed, as anxious as he to finish a miserable task.

The *Ranger* swung herself on gyros so the ion blast opposed her orbit. Thus checked, she spiraled inward at a safe, easy pace. She was in a nearly equatorial plane, to take advantage of the planet's rotation. The spiral therefore took her through the inner poison belt.

Like any world with a magnetic field, Rustum was surrounded by high-energy charged particles which formed bands at various distances from its center. Even through safety screens maintained at full strength, Kivi noted an increase in the radiation count. It was nothing to worry about, of course—

Until the detectors registered a meteor approaching along a possible collision path.

The few seconds of five-gravity blast by which the autopilot got the *Ranger* out of the way should have been routine. A warning whistle blew. Every man had ample time to brace himself or to lie down flat. Meteors big enough to be worth dodging aren't exactly common, but neither are they so rare in planetary neighborhoods that the maneuver is news.

This time, however, Jan Svoboda had taken the slings off an object massing over one ton, part of a nuclear generator, to gain access for disassembly purposes. Only a light aluminum framework supported the thing. At five gravities, it tore loose. It went through the thin after deck, caromed off the fire chamber shielding, and smashed a hole in the engine room wall through which stars peered.

The damage was not extreme, but involved a good deal of equipment auxiliary to the thermonuclear power plant. Designed to fail safe, the fusion reaction blinked out. Batteries took over, but they could only maintain the internal electrical system: not the ion drive or the radiation screen.

Suddenly the ship was full of roentgens.

The ferry had no room for anti-radiation apparatus. It could only be used to escape, before the crew got a serious dose. The *Ranger* drifted in orbit, abandoned. Invisible and inaudible, the poison currents seethed through her hull.

"I see." Judith nodded. A rippling went along her hair. "Thanks."

Kivi's mouth seemed more dry than a few minutes' talking warranted. "Happy to oblige," he mumbled.

"What are your plans now?"

"I—" Kivi's lips pressed together. "Nothing. Never mind."

"Did you come to see how Jan is?

I was about to go arrange accommodations for myself, till there's another ferry going back. But I'm sure Jan would be glad of—" Her voice trailed off. Svoboda had been curt enough with the captain, when they were all working down at camp.

Kivi put on an acid smile. "To be sure."

Inwardly he realized, with a jolt, that he didn't know why he had come here. To rail at the injured man, threaten punishments, take out his own despair by blaming the whole accident on the other? He was afraid there had been some such idea in him, not far below the surface of consciousness. But why? Svoboda was moody, short-tempered, short-spoken; but not really more irritating than any of these groundgrubbers. He was a leader among the Constitutionalists, one of those who had brought this colonizing project about —and surely no spaceman wanted the wretched assignment—yet a job was a job, to be completed rather than cursed.

"I...yes, I wanted to see how he was," blurted Kivi. "And, and confer with him—"

"Well, you can now!"

Kivi twisted himself around the stanchion he gripped, to face the inner door. It stood open, and Jan Svoboda hovered there.

The settler was a youngish man, dark and slender in hospital pajamas. His features were almost hidden by bandages; the framework of an action splint was spidery around his broken left collarbone, to give him some use of that arm; tape swathed his bare chest. "Jan!" exclaimed Judith. "Get back to bed!"

Svoboda grunted. "What's a bed in free fall, except a harness to keep you from drifting? I heard your voices." His eyes stabbed past his white mask, toward the captain. "All right. Here I am. Say what you want to say."

"The medical officer—" protested Kivi.

"I'm not under his orders," said Svoboda. "I know how much I'm able to move around."

"Jan." The woman caught his arm. "Please."

"How polite am I supposed to be to a man who tried to murder me?"

"That will do!" rasped Kivi.

He could imagine the mouth twisting upward, behind those bandages. "Go on," said Svoboda. "I'm in no shape to fight. Or you can simply have me arrested, you being the shipmaster. Go on, do whatever you came to do."

Judith grew quite pale. "Stop that, Jan!" she said. "It's not fair to call a man a coward if he doesn't respond, and a bully if he does!"

Silence came again. A minute had passed before Kivi realized he was staring at her.

Finally, rigidly, Svoboda said: "All right. Conceded. I suppose we can talk about a practical problem without tantrums. Can that ship be recovered?"

Kivi jerked his eyes from Judith. "I do not believe so," he said.

"Well, then, when can we start unloading it? I can still supervise that, though I may need an assistant."

"Unload?" Kivi trudged back from other thoughts. "What do you mean? The *Ranger* is in a poison belt. She cannot be unloaded."

"But wait a minute!" Svoboda grabbed the doorframe. His knuckles whitened. "It's carrying stuff the colony must have!"

"The colony must do without," said Kivi. Anger returned to him,

cold and flat.

"What? Do you— No, that's impossible! There must be a way to get those materials out of the ship!"

Kivi shrugged. "We shall make an inspection, of course. But I see very little hope. Believe me, Svoboda, it is just as serious for me to lose the *Ranger* as for you to lose her cargo."

Svoboda's faceless head shook violently. "Oh, no, it isn't. We have to stay on Rustum for the rest of our lives. Without some of that equipment, the lives will be short. You're going back to Earth."

"Earth is a long way off," said Kivi.

The *Migrant* eased in on the barest whisper of jets. Svoboda felt the bridge deck thrum faintly beneath his shoes. The existence of an "under," however small his weight, was a marvel.

Kivi looked up from his seat at the control console. "There she is," he said. "Have a look while I bring us alongside."

"What acceleration are you going to use?" asked Svoboda sharply.

Kivi's laugh rattled a bit. "No more than half a gee. You needn't strap in, if that is what you are... afraid...of." He gave his attention back to the ship, speaking low-voiced commands on the intercom, tapping console switches. The huge bulk of the *Migrant* was guided primarily by its autopilot, even in maneuvers as close as this. Kivi's job amounted to telling the robot: "Go toward that object."

Suppressing a retort, Svoboda bent over the viewscreen. At top magnification, the *Ranger* seemed almost a toy; but it grew rapidly to his sight. It spun end for end, wobbling along the invariable plane. Shadows and harsh sunlight chased each other across the shape. Not for the first time, Svoboda thought how ugly a spaceship was, a huge awkward spheroid surrounded by lumpish reaction-mass tanks, the ion drive accelerators jutting aft like skeletons, turrets poking from the hull like warts. Even the ferries, designed to move through air, were unhandsome. God, he thought, to stand on Rustum again and see the last ferry go skyward!

As for the alleged magnificence of space itself, he found the scene overrated. The stars were quite a sight, true: cold unblinking blazes strewn through a clear darkness. But there were too many of them. Only a professional could distinguish constellations in that unmeaningful swarm. And now, two-thirds of an Astronomical Unit distant, e Eridani had changed from star to sun. You had to turn your gaze quite away from it, and let your pupils dilate, before you could see anything except fire.

Kivi's voice jarred Svoboda aware again: "Have you spotted the piece of equipment which caused the trouble? It ought to be in orbit near the ship."

"No, not yet. It would be rather badly damaged anyway, I'm afraid." Svoboda squinted into the screen. Damn the undiffused illumination of airlessness! All he really saw was a jumble of nights and highlights. "I supposed a good deal of it can be salvaged, though. Once we get our machine shop set up down at camp, we can repair the unit."

"I fear you are being too optimistic. That stuff is gone forever."

Svoboda turned to the other man. He had not quite appreciated the implications of Kivi's pessimism before now. Perhaps he hadn't dared think

out what the captain meant. Now he knew horror. All he could say was, feebly, "Don't be ridiculous. Why can't we transfer the lading to this ship? For that matter, why can't we simply repair the *Ranger*?"

"I shall explain," said Kivi with elaborate sarcasm. "As far back as 1950 or 1960 or whenever it was, the first space probes discovered that Earth was hedged by belts of intense radiation, the largest of which extended from the north to the south auroral zone. The early spaceships departed on polar orbits to avoid those belts. It was soon established that space and time variations in the planet's magnetic field create a magnetohydrodynamic effect which concentrates energetic charged particles in such regions. Rustum possesses a similar set of belts. The *Ranger* is in orbit at a mean distance of 11,600 kilometers from the center of Rustum, which happens to be the very middle of the innermost radiation zone. A repair crew working on or in her would get a lethal dose in less than two days."

"For God's sake!" exploded Svoboda. He raised his left arm. A jag of pain went along the broken, metal-splinted clavicle. "Give me a straight answer! Our radiation screen extends outward for several kilometers. Why can't we lay alongside, including the *Ranger* in its field, and send men aboard her as much as we want to?"

"If you don't even know—" Kivi chopped off his sentence. "Very well. You do know that the screen generator uses the same magnetohydrodynamic principle to catch hold of those particles, and deflect them from the hull, as the planet uses to concentrate them. Yes? But those are extremely high-speed ions and electrons. They are not easily deflected. Most of them get far into the screen field—which, after all, obeys an approximate inverse-square law—before their paths even acquire an appreciable curvature. So the intensity of undeflected particles increases sharply with each meter you move from the hull. A man who went aboard the *Ranger*, with the *Migrant* directly beside her, would be in a four-day lethal concentration at her central axis. I mean by that, fifty percent of human-kind would die of radiation sickness if exposed for four days to such a dosage. If he continued to the far side of the *Ranger*, he would be in a two-and-a-half-day lethal concentration! Now do you understand?"

"Well...yes...I never knew—"

"The fact is little known outside my profession," said Kivi, a trifle mollified. "After all, it has normally no importance. Only in poison belts like this—where nobody lingers if they can help it—does the penetration through a force screen become significant. Most regions of space, you can get along without any screen."

"Still," said Svoboda, "by taking short watches, your men could repair the ship without—"

"No." Kivi shook his head, peered at the control board, and tapped a stud. "It would be useless. Remember, the force screen is a pulsating magnetic field of great intensity, designed to deflect charged particles. It is, of course, so heterodyned that it does not operate within the hull it protects. But if it envelops that derelict out there...do you see? Nothing more complicated than a thermal cutting torch could function. Certainly nothing electronic, probably not many things electrical, would work.

Since the smashed gear is essentially electronic, how shall it be fixed, recalibrated, tested? How shall the very tools to make the repairs be operated?"

Svoboda said desperately: "Well, can't we tow the *Ranger?* After all, we only need to get her out of this zone, into clear space. How much orbital radius need we lose to get there? Fifteen hundred kilometers? Two thousand?"

"We would wreck another ship if we tried that," snapped Kivi, impatient again. "Consider. We cannot pull; our ion blast would disintegrate the thing towed. It is ludicrous to think of pushing with our nose; the least unbalance, and those great masses would swing around and smash into each other."

"We could weld them together with a system of girders. Or, better yet, bring up another spaceship. Attach one to either side of the *Ranger.*"

"You have an exaggerated concept of interstellar spaceships," Kivi told him. "At nine-to-one mass ratios, they are not built like bulldozers. They are strengthened against longitudinal forces, but not much against lateral. Pulling or pushing so heavy and clumsy an object as another spaceship, they would yank the ribs right out of themselves. I thought of the idea too, and calculated, so I have figures to prove it is impossible."

"But the ferryboats—"

"Yes, they are sturdier. We could brace two ferryboats, or four, to the *Ranger's* hull, and decelerate the whole mess so that it fell inward. However, that would take considerable time, since we cannot apply much thrust without breaking the *Ranger* up. There must be crewmen aboard: so jerry-built a system cannot be controlled remotely. And what shall protect the crewmen from the radiation?"

"Why, a magnetic screen."

"Can't you think at all?" snorted Kivi. "The ferries don't have shielding generators. A spaceship would have to pace them—for men who must constantly watch such a jury rig and make manual compensations for its deficiencies, cannot be relieved every hour or two, which is all the unshielded exposure any of them would consent to take under any circumstances. So, I say, a spaceship would have to pace them. And I have just told you why that is impossible. Interference with electronic gear in the first place, insufficient protection in the second place. Now be quiet!"

He concentrated on the approach maneuver as if it were his enemy. Svoboda stood listening. Faintly he could hear the ship murmur around him, engines, oxygenators, airblowers, echoes down long resonant passageways. It was like being swallowed alive by some giant fish, he thought, and hearing its metabolism close in. He strangled on the wish to escape.

Only, he thought, vacuum lay outside, the sun was a blowtorch and shadows were colder than charity. Senses, untrained for free fall and shifting accelerations, had made his supercargo job a prolonged martyrdom. Antinausea pills kept him functioning, most of the time, but took away his appetite; the weakness of ill-nourished days underlay the shock and blood loss lately suffered. If Kivi knew how hard it had been, not to let go of every stretched nerve and scream aloud—

Suddenly he slumped with weari-

enss. It was almost as if he could remember the journey hither: not the single grindstone year when he had been activated to stand his turn tending other deepsleeping colonists, but the suspended animation period itself, four decades in hollow darkness. He hardly noticed the little bump of contact, nor the resumption of free fall, nor the quiver in the ship as grapnels made fast. Kivi had unstrapped before the Finn's voice registered:

"—and don't touch anything if you wait here. Understand?"

Svoboda gaped. "Where are you going?"

"To put on a spacesuit and inspect the wreck. Did you think I was bound for a tiddlywink tournament?"

"But the radiation—"

"I can stand an hour or so."

"Well, wait, I'll come too. I want to look at the cargo."

"No, stay here. You have already gotten a hefty dose, when the accident happened."

"So did you. Send a crewman who wasn't with us at the time."

Kivi squared his shoulders. "I am the captain," he said, and left the bridge.

Svoboda made no move to follow. His exhaustion was still upon him. And he thought dully that, well, Kivi wasn't married. Few interstellar spacemen were. Whereas Judith had spoken about having one more child, maybe two more.... Best not expose himself to any unnecessary irradiation.

Why did I come along at all, then? he wondered. *I could have stayed aboard the* Courier *with Judith— No. I have to be here. I can't allow Kivi to give up. We've got to have that equipment.*

It would be all too natural for the commander to abandon the cargo. Why take risks for the sake of some damned colonists? Svoboda remembered scene after scene down at camp, quarrels flaring between the settlers and the spacemen assigned to help them. Ground-breaking, tree felling, concrete pouring, well drilling, were not work for an astronaut. To make it still more insulting, they must needs take orders from the despised groundgrubbers. No wonder the most trivial friction could make a man lose control. So far there had only been fist fights, but Svoboda felt sure Kivi shared his own nightmare: knives and guns coming out, the Emperor River turned red.

Surely, thought Svoboda, no rational motive drove men to make such voyages, again and again and again, returning each time to an Earth grown more alien by decades. The spacemen were explorers. (Another reason for detesting the colonists. Rustum had already been visited once. This project forced men back to it who would otherwise have been seeing unimagined new worlds.) They had their own mystique.

Wryly: *As far as that goes, we Constitutionalists have no logical reason for coming to Rustum. We weren't badly off, materially, on Earth. Our first generations here will have a rough and lonely life at best, often a short life. We came because there is no more liberty on Earth, because our mores and language were being swallowed up, because of many reasons, none of which make sense to a spaceman. Of course we don't get along with Kivi's people! They and we belong to different civilizations!*

His eyes went to the screen. Linked, derelict and ship formed a new object with its own angular mo-

mentum and inertial constants. The complex pattern of spin had changed, though still too slow to give any noticeable weight. Now the bridge turret faced Rustum.

The planet was near half phase. Its shield sprawled across sixty-four degrees of sky, a great vague semicircle rimmed in fire where atmosphere refracted sunlight and a dayside so brilliant that it drowned stars and Svoboda must squint dazzled eyes. The edges were hazed; he could see ghostly auroral banners shaken loose just above the dark limb. The basic sunlit color was blue, shading from turquoise to opal. Clouds belted the planet with white, subtle gray and red tints. Beneath them, Svoboda could just make out a pair of continents, brownish green, overlain with the blue mist that was their sky. He thought of standing down there, under a hard steady pull of gravitation, tasting wind. Rustum grew so beautiful to him that he gulped back tears. It seemed he could almost reach out and touch his world.

He wrenched himself back toward reality. Rustum was dense forest, rearing scarps, hurricanes, rain and snow and drought; Rustum was a hostile ecology, poisonous plants, wild animals. Three thousand isolated humans would not survive without machines and scientific instruments.

Nonetheless he remained staring at it, like some modernistic Lucifer. The rapid orbit of the ships, two hours and forty-three minutes to complete a circuit, swung him dayward. Presently he was nearly blinded by sunlight, concentrated to a single point by a curving ocean surface. He stopped down the viewscreen, seeking details. Yes, that continent was Roxana, the children would be down there—

"Still waiting?" said Kivi behind him.

Svoboda turned with the fluttering gasp of tension. He lost his handhold, drifted free, and kicked ignominiously in the air. Kivi pulled him back.

"Well?" said Svoboda. His voice came out shrill.

"No use," said Kivi. He looked away. "We can do nothing."

"But for mercy's sake, man! Do you want to kill us?"

"I do not want to kill my own men." Kivi scowled out at the thin foam of the Milky Way. "Exactly what in that cargo is so crucial?"

"Everything! An atomic power generator. Part of a synthesizing laboratory. Biometric apparatus—"

"Can't you get along without it?"

"Rustum isn't Earth! We can't eat many native life forms. Our imported ones won't grow without ecological preparation. There are probably diseases, or will be as soon as a few native viruses mutate, to which we've no racial immunity whatever. We haven't yet found coal or oil down there, wood won't help much, sunpower and waterpower are insufficient, so we're dependent on atomic energy."

"You can always build what you need."

"Taking how long to do it? Eating and using what in the meantime? No, I suppose it may be theoretically possible for us to play Robinson Crusoe. In practice, it's too risky. We took along a bare minimum of material as it is—and there are so many unknown quantities on Rustum that we absolutely must have some safety margin." Svoboda shook his head. "I've got a couple of children, you know. I will *not* risk their lives

more than I have to!"

Kivi sighed. "Well, then, tell me how to recover that ship, or even how to unload any significant part of her cargo. I confess I don't know any way."

"Isn't it obvious? Unload her within a ship's force screen. It will give protection enough for men to work a few hours each without harm."

Kivi's mouth tightened. "No. The total number of man-hours required is too large."

"What? You have over 1600 men!"

"Who must shift cargo to the other ship by hand, since the magnetic screen will prevent their using our normal unloading machinery. So the job will be slow. As nearly as I can estimate it, each man would average several hours' exposure. And radiation effects are cumulative. A spaceman gets far more than is good for him during his ordinary working life. He will not take the dosage of years, all in one piece, for the sake of...a bunch of grubbers. I will not ask him to. I would face mutiny if I did, and when we got back to Earth the Society would support the mutineers."

Svoboda gaped at Kivi. It was like a drug dream, he thought. They made noises at each other, but somehow meaning did not get through.

"All right," he said. "We'll unload the ship ourselves. We settlers."

Kivi laughed aloud, with small merriment. "Do you seriously believe so? Why, untrained men would take so long at that job, the radiation would kill them before they had properly started!"

The captain looked toward his passenger. Briefly, there was a mildening in those slant blue eyes. "This is not easy for me, you know," he added quietly. "Earth has fewer spaceships each generation. I have lost one. I would rather have lost both my hands."

And then, in a moment: "Well, I suggest you flit downstairs and debate it with your fellows. They can decide if they want to continue their project under the new circumstances. Those who don't can return home with the fleet. We can take them, distributed among the remaining ships, if we have larger watches to reduce the deepsleep apparatus needed."

But that will be all of us! Svoboda cried out. *The few who are stubborn enough to remain will be too few to survive under any conditions. You have just condemned the Rustum colony to death, and thereby everything the colony believed in. It has all been for nothing.*

Aloud: "This is just engineering estimate, Kivi. You don't know it will take so long to unload. You can't be quite certain it's impossible for two spaceships to haul the *Ranger*."

"Certain enough," said Kivi. "I shall not risk another vessel, or another crewman's life. Not for any reason."

He whipped himself into the pilot chair and fastened the harness. "Back to the *Courier*," he said into the intercom. "All hands stand by for release of derelict and blastoff."

His fingers paused above the board. "There is one other thing, Svoboda," he said. "Even if my men did agree to unload for you, which I know very well they won't, I should not allow it."

Svoboda hunched together. He had taken too many blows. Starlight filled his eyes, but did not reach his awareness. "Why?" he said.

"Because it would add weeks to

our stay here," answered Kivi. "Only a few men at a time could be on the *Ranger*. The rest must stay cooped on the other ships, idle; or must wait on the ground at your camp. Either alternative is explosive."

"What?"

"It is one thing for an all-male expedition to visit a star." Kivi's tones were thin. "It is another to mingle with more than a thousand nubile women, none of them ours. What do you think the basic reason is for all the enmity and fights there have been? How long till such a fight ends in someone's death? And then when the killer, whether spaceman or grubber, is brought to trial, what do you think his fellows will do about it? —And yet I can't let my men sit in orbit, week after week, when they might be on the ground. We have a long voyage ahead of us; I dare not begin it with ruined morale."

Svoboda sat down, though the onset of acceleration was weak enough. For the first time, he began to see that Kivi also had a right to unreasonableness.

He stared ahead of him. The rain outside should have been visible, he thought. He should have heard it hissing against the magnetic screen. Unsensed death warded off by unsensed armor, no, his mind could understand but his instincts revolted. All they wanted was to hold Judith and the children close against him, under a sky which merely threw thunderbolts.

Bemused, he tried to convince himself of physics. Just because you can't see electrons and protons going by, doesn't mean they aren't real. You can watch their trail through a cloud chamber; a photographic plate will show them rebounding.... Magnetic fields are quite as real. A powerful magnet will snatch a knife from your hand, cutting you, if you go too close to its poles. Planetary magnetism will swing a needle to guide you home.

For that matter, who ever saw or heard or measured an emotion? And yet love, hate, fear had harried men out between the stars, where despair broke them. The gross matter of a man's body could pace in futile circles, worrying, till an unweighable thought stopped him in his tracks. If only a thought could stop a spaceship in its orbit with the same ease. But an idea was not a magnetic field.

Or was it?

Svoboda leaped from his chair. He banged his left arm against its headrest. Anguish went in a wave through him, crested by his yell. Kivi looked around. "What's wrong?" he snapped.

Fighting back tears, Svoboda said through the throbbing: "I believe I have a way. I have a way—"

"Will it take long?" asked Kivi, not impressed.

"It, it, it might."

"Then forget it."

"But Judas in hell!" Svoboda felt his collarbone. The splint seemed intact. Pain receded like a tide, advancing and then retreating once more. He chose a moment when his brain was clear to choke out: "Will you listen to me? We can save the ship too!"

"And perhaps lose twenty men to murder and riot. No!" Kivi's face was held straight forward, expressionless. "I told you, Svoboda, the tension between our two camps is already dangerous. I hardly dare wait long enough to unload the remaining ships and fill our tanks. Then I must go! Not an extra day

will I add in this God-hated place!"

"But the ship—you said—"

"I know. It will hurt my own standing, to comeback without a ship. I may lose my command. But I am not a fanatic, Svoboda. You are willing to give up Judith's life, to preserve that weird philosophy of yours. And what is it, anyhow, but an assertion of your own immortal importance? I am not willing to let men be hurt, perhaps die, that my record may look good. I am going to bring a whole crew home, if not a whole fleet. And if you settlers give up and come home with us—as I think you will—before Heaven, I will have done you a favor!" He turned blind blue eyes around and yelled: "Get out! I do not want to hear your crazy plan! Get off the bridge and leave me alone!"

There was even less privacy on a spaceship than on Earth. Svoboda and his wife finally gave up looking for a place to be by themselves; they were ordered out of too many sections by crewmen who too obviously enjoyed the ordering. They returned to the forecastle and free-sat behind drawn curtains in Judith's bunk space. From time to time, the rattle of fantan sticks on a magnetized table and the jabber of voices cut across their awareness.

He saw through the gloom of the cramped space that her eyes were enormous and dark-ringed. She was worn down as far as himself, he realized. His helplessness to aid her chewed in him.

"But didn't he even hear your idea?" she asked. "I can't understand that."

"Oh, yes," said Svoboda wearily. "He blew a fuse and ordered me off the bridge, as I told you. But by the time we'd returned here to the *Courier*, he had cooled enough to hear me out, when I insisted he do so. I'd used the interim to make some rough calculations, and proved to him that my scheme really would work."

She still hadn't asked him what it was. But she had always been that way, he remembered: like most women, keeping her warmth for human things and leaving the abstractions to her husband. He often thought that she had come to Rustum less for any belief than for him.

Puzzled, she asked: "He rejected your plan anyhow?"

"Yes. He listened, agreed it was practical, but claimed it was not practicable. When I started to argue, he lost his temper again and stormed away."

"It isn't like Nils at all," she murmured.

Svoboda started. "What are you doing on first name terms with him?"

"Why, I thought you knew—" Judith paused. "No, maybe not. You kept so busy down at camp, and you were so cold to him, to all the spacemen. I could never see why. He was very kind, both to me and the children. He and David were almost inseparable. He taught David the local woodcraft, the tricks and trails he had learned on the first expedition here." She rubbed her eyes. "That's why I don't understand his attitude now."

"Well, he is under a strain too," Svoboda admitted grudgingly. "It was a hard blow, to lose that ship."

"Then he ought to be all the more anxious to recover it."

"Uh-huh. But it's true that my idea, while simple and elegant—" Svoboda grinned lopsided—"will

certainly take time. A few crewmen will keep busy. The rest will have nothing to do, once the last bottoms have been unloaded and all the tanks refilled."

"Can't they go into deepsleep? They have to anyway, for the trip home."

"No, I'm afraid not. My scheme does involve some high-powered maneuvering, spurts of several gravities' acceleration. The sleep tanks are too lightly built to stand that when assembled—to save mass. In fact, you recall the embarkation procedure: the fleet put in an extremely high orbit, colonists and crew ferried out and only then snuggled down in suspended animation. That was to minimize the meteor hazard, since a shipful of sleepers can't dodge. We debarked the same way. There are too many rocks near a planet.... And every ship will be needed for this job, if it isn't to drag on so long that all our supplies are eaten up... No, most of the crew will have to wait on the ground. Kivi is right, that can lead to trouble."

A darkness crossed her. "Yes. Already—" She broke off .

"What?" rapped Svoboda.

"Nothing."

He caught her wrist so she winced. "Tell me! I have a right to know."

"Nothing, I said! A man made a pass at me...one of the spacemen... a few days ago, at camp. Nothing happened. I yelled, and Charlie Lochaber came running. The spaceman backed away. There wasn't even a fight."

Svoboda stiffened before he said, harshly, "There had better be two separate camps. Our people in one, Kivi's in the other. No social contact between the two, and no colonist ever to be alone."

"But that's horrible! Those men have worked hard for us. They—"

Svoboda sighed. "Well, we can always thresh out the details. It won't be easy, whatever we decide. I can sympathize with Kivi's wish to spare his crew that sort of trouble. He has their morale to worry about, all the way home."

"And so you think, rather than risk a few of his men getting hurt, he will condemn us to almost certain failure?"

"Evidently."

Judith shook her head. "No. You're wrong, Jan. Consideration for his crew is one factor, yes. But Nils doesn't hate us. You've seen his rough side. I tell you, he was never anything but pleasant to me and the kids. He won't leave us here to die. He isn't capable of it."

Svoboda studied her a while. She wasn't beautiful, he thought; not in any conventional sense; but she was Judith, which was more. A wisp of an idea stirred. "Are you certain?" he asked.

"Yes. As sure as I can be of anything, dear."

"All right. Then I begin to see Kivi's thinking. He doesn't believe we *will* stay here if it's too dangerous, but will all return to Earth. So of course he won't be a murderer. He can even tell himself that he's not only saving trouble, forestalling possible killings, while the spacemen remain at Rustum—he's saving the lives of colonists, who would otherwise die in the next several years."

"Yes, that must be it. You can't expect him to admit there's any sense in this colonizing." Judith smiled faintly. "Why, it will be generations, no doubt, before we're able to build spaceships of our own!"

"There's more involved than that."

Svoboda looked at her till she squirmed uneasily. And the knowledge grew within him.

"Are we really going to give up?" she whispered.

He answered absent-mindedly, his eyes never leaving her: "I expect a majority will elect to do so."

"And then the minority can hardly stay, can it?" Her lashes fluttered, as if seeking escape from his gaze. "We'll all have to return."

"How do you feel about that?"

"I...oh...of course I'm sorry, Jan! It all seems so...such a pity... And we sold everything to finance this, we'll come back poor, to an Earth full of strangers. And it meant so much to you!"

"But still, you wouldn't be altogether heartbroken. Would you?"

"What are you getting at?" she bridled. "Quit staring at me!"

Svoboda clamped teeth together. There was no chance to explain. If any of the bored men outside these curtains understood English, they were surely eavesdropping. To lay his plan out openly was to destroy its value. He took his wife's hands. "Judith," he said, "I've something to ask. The hardest thing you ever did for me, and you've done more already than I had any right to expect."

She grew steady again, though her smile was uncertain. "What is it?"

"However the vote goes—even if every single one of the others chooses to return—will you stay on Rustum with me and the kids?"

She stiffened. He felt her fingers grow cold.

"I'm not out of my head," he pleaded. "We can do it, I swear we can. Or if not— Don't you remember what Earth was making Davy and Jocelyn into?"

She caught a shaken breath. "You always said—"

"Uh-huh. The old proverb. Better to die on your feet than live on your knees."

"It's a nice slogan," she said bitterly.

Svoboda made his final cast. "Whatever happens," he said, "*I* am staying."

He sat quiet then. At last she crept against him. "All right," she said.

He embraced her. To hell with any listening spacemen.

For a while they talked of what to do, if indeed they found themselves alone in High America. But Judith leaped from the subject with a strained little laugh. "We may not have to," she said. "I may be able to talk Nils into salvaging the *Ranger*."

"Not if you approach him directly," said Svoboda. "He'll only tell you to be sensible, shut up and come home to Earth."

"What is your salvage scheme, anyhow, Jan?"

"Oh. That." Svoboda smiled stiffly behind his bandages. "An obvious one, actually. Somebody else would doubtless have thought of it if I hadn't. You know about the mechanism that creates the poison belts? Well, a planet's magnetic field is comparatively weak at any given spot, but it covers an enormous volume of space. That's how it can trap all those particles. A spaceship's protective magnetic screen can't possibly be that extensive, so it has to make up in sheer intensity. The forces which can deflect a fast-moving ion in the distance of a few kilometers, are enormous. It takes a thermonuclear power plant to generate them.

"Well, the *Ranger* is a metallic object, loaded with other metallic

objects. A conductor. If you move any conductor across a magnetic field, or vice versa, you generate an EMF, whose value depends on the speed of the motion and the intensity of the field. Have you ever seen that classroom demonstration, where a sheet of copper is allowed to fall between the poles of a strong magnet? As it enters the field, its rate of fall slows down quite dramatically. The reason is that it cuts the lines of force. This sets up eddy currents in the copper. The energy of its fall is converted from velocity to electricity."

"Oh!" exclaimed Judith. "Of course!"

"You see? We'll send all the other ships of the fleet, turn by turn, past the *Ranger*, as fast and as close as possible. Which can be very fast and quite close indeed, under autopilot guidance, especially if the ships move in a hyperbolic path opposite to the derelict's orbit. Thirty or forty kilometers a second should be easily attainable, I think. The ships' magnetic screens will be cranked up to the maximum anyway, to protect the crews. So...the *Ranger* will be slowed, just as if it had encountered a resisting medium. It will lose energy, spiral into a lower orbit. After a sufficient number of passes, it will be in a safe region and a repair gang can board it."

"Why, that's a wonderful idea!" Judith hesitated. "But how about the ships themselves? I mean, isn't there some reaction on them?"

"Yes. They'll be decelerated too. Newton's third law. But they'll make the actual pass in free fall, so it shouldn't strain them much more than any shift in local force fields. Besides, they won't be decelerated much. We'll fill up their mass tanks, leaving the *Ranger's* empty. Even allowing for cargo, each active ship ought to have eight times the mass of the wreck, and thus be affected correspondingly little.... Anyhow, we can't hurry the process. Eddy currents generate heat, which has to dissipate. In this case, the gravitational energy difference amounts to something formidable. I estimate 2500 calories per gram. We don't want to melt the *Ranger!*"

"But you could keep it cool, and get rid of the heat as fast as you want," suggested Judith. "Rig a pump on one spaceship, fill its tanks with water, squirt water onto the derelict. That would boil off and take all the heat with it."

"Good girl! That angle occurred to me. There are other possibilities which may turn out to be preferable. The important thing is, we can do the job, if only Kivi—"

A voice beyond the curtains, strongly accented: "Pleasse for Meester and Meesis Shofobota report to cappitain's office."

Judith stared. "What?"

"I expected this," said Svoboda. "Someone listened to us and hurried to play informer. I'm as glad of it. Let's have this out at once."

They went hand in hand down the passageways. A knock on Kivi's door brought a harsh: "Enter." Svoboda let Judith go through, followed, and closed the door behind him.

The office, which was also the captain's cabin, was small, crowded with booktapes and music spools, otherwise austere as any monkish cell. Kivi glared across the spider-legged magnetic board which was his desk. Somehow, subtly, the Finn had become disheveled. His eyes were dry and hot.

"What is this nonsense about your

staying?" he demanded.

"It's our business," Svoboda answered.

"Yours, perhaps. You may leave your bones on Rustum if you wish. But your wife? Your children?" Kivi's face swung toward Judith. "He cannot compel you. I offer my protection."

She huddled close to her husband. "Nobody is forcing me," she said in a small voice.

"But you are insane!" cried Kivi. "This whole project was always a gambling against loaded dice. Now, without the *Ranger's* cargo, the risks have shot up so far that most of your people will surely choose to return. Which makes death certain for any who stay behind."

"Let me judge that for myself," said Svoboda.

Kivi swiped the air, as if to strike him. "Judith," he said, "you do not understand what is involved."

Her head lifted. "I understand what I promised at my wedding," she told him.

Kivi sagged back. "I am not being a monster," he begged, like an old man. "I want to save my crew trouble, possible manslayings. That is why I would not hear any long-drawn recovery plans. I will most gladly take your people home. And, yes, I have money. I can help you, Judith, and your family get started again on Earth. What other use has a bachelor for his money?"

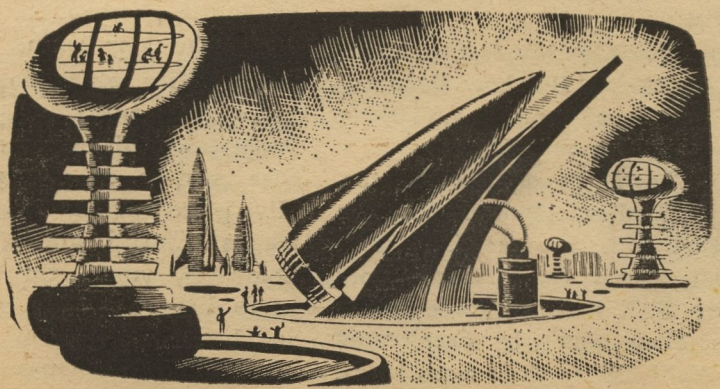
"No," said Svoboda. "We're staying. It's not open to argument. You have no power to make us leave. If you try it, there will really be trouble between our camps!"

"Don't talk that way, Jan." Tears stood in Judith's eyes. They broke off and floated toward the ventilator grilled, like tiny stars. "Nils means well."

Svoboda said with chosen cruelty: "No doubt. So abide by your statistics, Kivi. Avoid whatever hazard there may be to your crew. Let the colony break up. At worst, it should only cost four lives."

And then, as Kivi's mouth grew unfirm and Svoboda saw victory, he would have given much not to have spoken.

The captain shivered. He looked at Judith, and away, and back again. "You know I cannot do that," he said. "Very well, we shall salvage the *Ranger*. Now please leave me alone."



friend to man

by HARLAN ELLISON

TWIN GLOBES, polished surfaces buried in golden sand, still staring at a face-down universe. Molybdenum claws, powered from a groin of metal, futilely stretched in the golden sand. Powerpak dead... counterweights thrown from sockets ...rust making the first microscopic smearings on gloss-bright indestructible hide.

Most Unworthy One lay on his face mid the shock-blasted wreckage of His home. Most Unworthy One's right arm was extended, as he had fallen, reaching for the last can of lubricant. Blessed oil, that could pick him up, start his synapses sparking, trigger his movements, send him to His aid, wherever He might be, whatever danger surround Him.

Instead, he lay face down, whirling motes of dust rising shape-into-shape up flues of moist green sunlight. A sky diseased, leprous and shimmering in a world-socket turned to ash.

While Most Unworthy One stretched short of life.

Life gauged in millimetres, ball bearings and closed circuits. Life imparted on a production line in a now-fled time in a now-dead place he had known very well as Detroit. Where cars had been made, and vacuum sweepers, and generators, and robots.

It had never been difficult, the knowing. There was flesh, and there was the way *he* was, not-flesh. It was his honor, his destiny to serve flesh; and when they had sent Most Unworthy One to serve Him, it had been the sun and the warmth and the hunger for work. It had been so very, very good.

He had been an artist. Working with palette and brush and cassein He had often called over His shoulder from the high stool before the easel: "See, friend (He had indulged Himself by calling the servant with friendship) see how the paleness of the eyes attracts before the red of the mouth. Do you see it?"

Or other words that drew Most Unworthy One's attention to some-

thing in His work. And oddly, Most Unworthy One *did* see, *did* sense, *did* revel in the wonder there on canvas.

Then He would turn, wiping his fingertips dry on the square of muslin, and stare deeply at Most Unworthy One. "My art," He would say, "is nothing compared to yours. The beauty of you...can you know what I mean?"

And Most Unworthy One's gears would mesh, for he did not completely understand, but he knew that His words held affection, and they had programmed affection, so it had value, it had merit.

"May I serve you forever?" Most Unworthy One would ask at those times, hoping the answer would be the same as it had always been; hoping silently, hoping.

"I'll always take care of you," He would say, which had no meaning, really. For everyone knew that the robots took care of the flesh. That was the way the world was set up. But it was kind of Him to say it, and again, oddly, Most Unworthy One believed it. He would take care when the time came. Though Most Unworthy One watched over Him, if ever the robot needed succor, it would come from Him, or others like Him.

For Man was good and strong and forever. Metal was flawed by the ills of time and rust and climatic caprice. So Most Unworthy One lay and waited, confidently, knowing He would one day come and lift the robot from the sand, and pour the life-bringing oil into the proper feeder channels. Then Most Unworthy One could return to his tasks of seeing after Him.

Minor chores, the looking-afterness? Yes, that was for men of metal. But the *real* chores, the work that could only be done by Him...that must come when He came.

As He would come. Some time soon.

He did not forget His friends.

Across the moor that had once been a borough, nine men huddled inside a shell that had been a lobby. Behind a frosted, melted non-shape that had been a florist's booth, they crouched, rifles only slightly off-ready. One of the men had been a plumber. Another had been a statistical consultant. A third had been a chassis dynamometer technician in a large automobile agency. A fourth had used a stick with a nail at its end in parks.

One had been an artist and had owned his very own robot, who now lay face down in the rubble of the artist's former home. The artist was unaware of the robot's condition or needs.

Right now, he was thirty-five minutes from possible death.

"They came in the Brooklyn-Battery tunnel," the taxidermist murmured, shovel-fingering back his long, grey hair. "I saw a smoke signal about an hour ago from down there." The others nodded their heads knowingly, imperceptibly. "George Adams told me they had a battalion of robots with them," the taxidermist concluded.

"But *dammit* that's against the treaties; no gas, no germs, no fusion bombs, no robots," snarled the plumber. "What the hell are they trying to prove?"

The artist mused ruefully, "They're trying to kill us, man. And they've gotten far enough so they don't have to worry about treaties. If they want to use robots, there isn't really a lot we can do to stop them, is there?"

Agreeing mutters went up.

The old man, the one who had taught comparative philosophy in one of the greater Midwestern universities, thrust, "We should have attacked them before they attacked *us!* It was foolish to have gone on letting them bait us, killing us here and

there, and when they were ready... they jumped. We should have attacked them *first!*"

They all knew there was something wrong with his concept, but they could not voice their objections. There was no doubt he had a point.

A tall, emaciated man with pants legs flapping stumped into the lobby. "Hey, y'round?"

The plumber stood up and waved the rifle over his head. "Over here, and *shut up*, you goddam bigmouth!"

The thin man flap-legged to the florist's booth. "I seen 'em. I seen 'em comin' down Fifth Avenue. They got a rank'a robots in the front. Everybody's scatterin'!"

"Well, *we* won't scatter," the philosophy professor made a fist and his shadow did the same. "Come along! Let's get them..."

The artist gripped the rising man's shoulder. "Sit *down*. Don't be imbecilic. They'd cut us into strips if we wandered out there. There's only ten of us, with sporting rifles. They've got flame throwers, robots, tanks, what the hell's the matter with you?"

"I can't stand to see Americans running like—"

"Cut the patriotism," the park attendant chopped.

"Anybody got a suggestion?" the garage mechanic ventured, tired of the bickering.

There was silence.

Tehuantepec, thought the artist absently, illogically, *how I'd love to be back in Tehuantepec, doing the mountains with brush strokes like flowing gold or burning in the sun's death.*

But Mexico had long since fallen to the locust-like advance of the Enemy.

The last patriots in America's greatest city huddled and hummed silently, and were without direction or plan.

One of the ten was a bowlegged, withdrawn man who had, at one time, combed his thinning hair straight back over the bald spot that lay accusingly in the center front of his scalp. His eyes were watery behind corrective lenses. He had been an optometrist.

"I have a suggestion," he offered. Heads turned to him; they looked at him, but received only an image. People saw *at* this man, they did not see *him*. But he had an idea.

"In del Castillo's service under Cortes—" he began, and was cut off by a rueful snort from the professor, which, in turn, was cut off by a slap on the back from the plumber, "—he reports in his book how they defeated an unwary group of hostile Aztecs by rolling boulders down on them from above."

"Yes, very nice," the professor snapped irritatedly. "You, sir, are a monumental ass. How does a book written in the 16th Century help us? Grow up!"

The artist's face lit. He remembered Mexico, the look of it, the smell and sound of it, and the sight of rock basins grew where it had once been. "Shut up, you," he asserted. "I know what he means. Fella, I think you've got something there. I do, I really do..."

The Enemy came down the street rank on rank. There was no need for reluctance, no need for hesitation or skulking. The preparatory seeding of the city had been an eminent example of pre-consolidation softening. There was a light-hearted manner to them. They had paused to camp in the Battery, changing to dry socks, filling their bellies with rice and fish heads, regaining the topness of their morale.

Now they were here, the conquerors.

First came the file of robots, their sleek and shining hides decorated with yellow calligraphy, connoting ferocity, intrepidness, or ancestor

honor.

Behind them, in a marsh-wagon adaptable to any terrain, came the coxswain, his electronic megaphones aimed at the rank of robots, ready to order them at an instant's awareness. Then came the troops.

The artist, the plumber, the optometrist, the other seven, they watched from above as the robots passed beneath. "Get the coxswain," the artist directed. "Get him and the robots won't have direction."

The others nodded. The statistician, who had done some bear hunting in the Adirondacks, had been labeled the sharpshooter of the group, but three others backed him in case of a miss. They weren't expecting one, but safety, you know, fella, just safety.

The last rank of troops—there were only fifteen waves in this group—turned onto the street, and the sharp-shooter raised the 30.06, removed from a gutted sports store, to his shoulder. The cheek welded down tight to the metal behind the sight, and the eye came close to the tiny hole. The polished wood of the stock fit under the shoulder as though it had grown there, and the left hand cupped gently but firmly along the barrel and receiver grouping. The right hand moved without hesitation to the trigger housing and paused on the curved bit of metal before moving on to the trigger itself. The sharp-shooter followed with his eye and the muzzle of the rifle, tracking the marsh-wagon and plotting the course of the coxswain's helmeted forehead.

Then, as the sun rode behind a ridge of cloud, the finger curled around the trigger, the sight came down to a micro-point three feet in front of the marsh-wagon, and as the vehicle slid between the crossed hairs of the sight, the finger lovingly squeezed the tongue of metal.

The rifle leaped, bucking against the statistician's shoulder, a wisp of muzzle gas lifted away on the wind, and the report echoed between the building like a steel casting, thrown from a great height.

The coxswain shrieked and slapped a hand to his erupting forehead, tearing away the megaphone control helmet with the other hand. His mouth opened wide in a toothy, wordless scream, and as the dark fluid blinded him, he pitched forward, over the raised-high side of the marsh-wagon. His body sprawled on the street. It was a signal.

The laboriously-h a n d m a d e fire bombs casacaded from the building-tops. They landed and spattered and napalm blossomed among the ranks. The robots, unguided, milled about an instant, then silently, fluidly gathered into a knot away from the center of destruction.

An attack team (ringed in by fire and weirdly dancing comrades faced with flames—bracketed up their heavy mortar and lobbed a shell at the building. The shell dropped short, smacked the outcropping cornice of the building and plummeted to explode amidst their own men.

In a matter of minutes the fifteen ranks were decimated, all but one atomic artillery piece, manned by three men in heat-suits. They brought the weapon into play, and on the third shot tore away the first two floors of the building, killing the tiny knot of guerillas, and ending the sortie.

Before they could escape, however, the flames enveloped them (for the street itself had been pre-soaked—deadly bathroom mechanics those Americans) and within their heat-suits they blistered, gagged and died.

The street was silent. The line of robots, now a glittering array of metal as the sun broke through once more, milled uncertainly, and finally moved off.

For a long while the city was filled

with noise, then as though a cosmic symphony had concluded...silence leaf-dropped and this particular war was ended. The winner had won.

Most Unworthy One could not know death. His was a life easily imbalanced, but never ended. He lay face down, one arm extended in hungry prayer to the cask of oil, and remorselessly waited for total darkout.

Then the sand and rubble clattered and snapped.

Someone was coming, and Most Unworthy One knew it was Him, it could only be Him. The silent promises and the spoken promises He had always made to take care of His servant were coming true. He was coming.

Most Unworthy One felt the footsteps progress past to the can of oil, and heard its bulk being wrenched from the sand and debris. Then the footsteps came back, and someone knelt beside Most Unworthy One. The feeder box was gently opened, the telescoping funnel was extended, and a moment later the golden-crimson-violet stream went gurgling into the proper channels.

"You'll be all right now," a voice said. "The war's over and we've got a lot of work to do." It was colloquial, it was the way He had talked, it was the master and the protector back from death to help His Most Unworthy One.

"Let me help you," the voice said. And strong arms went under Most Unworthy One's shoulders, lifting him.

Strong arms of metal.

Most Unworthy One looked up as he stood, into multi-faceted eyes that burned with Man-given intelligence. The friend of Man had returned.

Sadly, he felt it would not be difficult to re-form allegiances. Times change, and few things are forever.

The day would be chilly, but it didn't really matter.

UNIVERSE IN BOOKS

is held over this month, for lack of space, but we want to share with you the reactions, in England, to a novel column.

You may recall this column as praising. James Blish's A CASE FOR CONSCIENCE has been called "a theological thriller.....impressive and sympathetic" *(Times Literary Supplement);* "not only *a* science-fiction but philosophy fiction" *(Punch);* "a first class work of the imagination. Perhaps even better, it is unique." *(Oxford Mail);* "a daring and imaginative adventure in space-age thinking...the author skillfully uses the brilliantly written dialogue of these finely drawn characters to present and examine a succession of thought provoking ideas and propositions." *(Sheffield Telegraph*—this by a clergyman); "the most intelligent, adult science-fiction novel to be published in the last few years" *(Liverpool Daily Post);* "In (this novel) science fiction reaches full maturity....utterly fantastic, yet oddly believable." *(Catholic Herald).* Glad to see the English agree.....

THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN

by IVAN T. SANDERSON

THE RACE to capture the soul of Man has been on since before so-called civilization began. But despite the efforts of many tyrants and dictators it has been *religion* that has triumphed in the long run. Today there is a gargantuan struggle in progress between what we call "The East" and "The West" and this is as much for the soul of humanity as for the first landing on the Moon. Alas, we are more interested in the latter while our rivals have the nerve to pay more attention to the former. In fact, they seem to think of everything and they appear to be a lot more pragmatic and a lot less squeamish than we are. They are willing to go into anything, however off-beat it may at first appear to be. Such "basic research" sometimes pays monumental dividends and there is one that could trump all our efforts: the ultimate Russian checkmate. But let me ask you a simple question.

Do you *really* beieve in evolution? This will probably conjure up visions of Charles Darwin and probably some notion that the scientists would have us believe that we are "descended from apes", but do you honestly believe this; deep down, I mean? Maybe you do, but if you are really honest about it I am prepared to bet some thousands to one that you do not. Don't you say to yourself that it's alright for *scientists* to say that, and to believe it; and maybe for your kids to be taught it in school *but*...well, after all...don't we know that we are all made *in the image of God* and that animals are not? So let me ask you another question.

Supposing you ran into a creature that was not just a "cross" between a Man and an Ape but a perfectly normal progeny of a whole race of beings that was neither quite man nor quite animal. What, apart from taking off for the nearest hills, would you do? More important, what would you *think?* Let me put it this

way. If such a creature menaced you, would you shoot it? And if you did, would you feel you had committed murder or just been out hunting? If you saw some other people put it in a cage would you demand its release on *humanitarian* grounds or would you just look at it from a safe distance as an interesting new zoo specimen? And if you felt it should have freedom of movement would you feel that it ought to have a vote and a voice in the councils of the United Nations? What I mean is, where do you draw the line between human and non-human, and on what criteria?

You can go to the legal fellows or you can go to the Bible, but I am afraid you won't get any consolation or help from either. Both are rather specific on the subject of *humanity*. We humans have certain privileges and rights said to have been granted to us by God, and these rights are allegedly protected by our own peers. All other living things do not have these privileges and rights, though today we grant them some measure of protection unless, of course, we want to eat them or there are too many of them or we deem them our rivals. Be this as it may, the sum total of our existence is that we have one set of rules for our own kind and another set for all other kinds. Just what would we do if we were confronted with something that was exactly halfway between the two?

This is a nice question that we have not bothered so far even to ask ourselves. Our competitors have, and they are convinced that just such creatures exist.

While only a handful of us in the so-called West have even heard of such ticket-scalpers on the outskirts of the great international ball-park, and while only one man has really tried single-handedly to do anything about the matter, our rivals have built a whole institution in Moscow to investigate the problem and they have at this moment seventeen highly trained scientists in the field looking into the matter. But why?

Simply because the stakes are higher in this than in any other propaganda game and the winner will gain vastly more by winning this game than by being first on the moon. The stakes are nothing short of the very Soul of Man, for this offbeat quest is a practical effort to capture something that can rock our entire religious and ethical pyramid to its very foundations. This is simply a living example of the famous "missing link" between Man and Non-Man, otherwise known as the *Yeti*, or one of its now various reported cousins. But before I go into the facts of this business I must continue for a bit on the ethical and the political theme.

That such intermediate beings are still living today, in various forms, and all over an area in Asia alone about three times that of the United States, may not have been demonstrated to *our* satisfaction—that is to us, the people, of the "West"—but it apparently has been so to our competitors in the "East". You may snigger and laugh at this suggestion; you may call it crackpot, alarmist, newspaper twaddle, mass hallucination, the maunderings of benighted "natives", or simply the product of the imaginations of mountaineers whose minds have been drugged by altitude, and thus dispose of the whole thing as nonsense. But you cannot dismiss the fact that the Russians have a whole building in Moscow devoted solely to the investigation of this matter, staffed by top-notch scientists and technicians, and that they have published among other works on the subject, a whole book somewhat larger than our standard novel, on the bones of the hand alone, of a certain type of cave man that is

thought to be the prototype of this half-and-half "missing link". Further, the Russians have these seventeen scientists in the field and spread out all the way from the Pamirs in the southwest to Outer Mongolia in the east, looking for this "thing" or "things".

Now what does this mean? Simply that our rivals in the battle for the soul of humanity believe in something that we scoff at, and that they are on the ball both officially and actively while we sit around and poke fun at the few—so very few—private individuals in our free estate who are spending their own fortunes or their hard-earned savings to match the massive efforts of the entire Russian Empire. And the stakes are nothing short of our very souls, for if our rivals get an example of this prize first, all Hell literally is going to break loose, for then every one of us will really have to ask ourselves that question—do I believe in evolution? And what is more, we will have to answer it. Let us think this thing through.

Just suppose that one of our side captured one of these *Yetis*, or *Metoh Kangmi*, or *Orang Pendek*, or even a *Sasquatch* (see below) alive, what would we do with it, or be permitted to do with it? Should one put it in a cage or ask it in for afternoon tea? And if it strangled your mother or raped your sister would you be at liberty to shoot it on sight or would you have to have it arrested? And then about the trial? Quite apart from the language difficulty, what's the law? It's not in the book and it's not in *The Book*. The creature is "responsible", for it's not insane, and if it comes from, say, Nepal it it a Nepalese citizen—if it's human that is —and it immediately has all kinds of rights. But who is going to say that it's human. Yet, if anybody wants to say it's an animal he's going to have to explain himself to the church to which he belongs. The Almighty made us in *His* image; and in His infinite wisdom He made the animals in...what? The situation, in fact, immediately becomes both difficult and unpleasant to say the least.

But what if the "other side" gets the prize first?

The Marxists have been telling the non-literate and the semi-literate peoples of the world—and a lot of others who are supposed to be literate besides—for half a century now that there is a dastardly capitalist plot to keep them in slavery and that this is aided and abetted by religion. After the initial shock of this accusation had worn off, not only organized religion but a large part of humanity rebounded with a rather tough denial, stating and in good measure proving to all and sundry that there is no such "plot" for them to aid, and demonstrating that they are not abetting any such thing. But then comes this evolution business.

While this is not anti-religious, it flies directly in the face of all faiths —with the exception of the original teachings of the Guatama Buddha— all of which have insisted than Man is made in the image of the Deity. Just suppose for a moment that the non-religious, which is to say the present-day Communists, produce a living creature that is neither a "man" nor a "beast" but just halfway between the two. Where does this leave the "faithful"? What better propaganda weapon could be provided?

Anything short of a gibbering ape itself can see immediately that either God did not do that which he has so far been alleged to have done, or the cherished beliefs of the faithful are false. In either case it's "our side" that will have to do the explaining while "their side" can ride high on the demonstrable fact that something is and always has been very wrong

somewhere, to say the least, and just as they always said.

We have a genius for writing laws to cope with new situations and the legal boys could doubtless get us out of our distress in this case and in short order by, for instance, simply stating that living creatures which do not speak a human language are non-human, therefore "beasts", and ergo have no rights. But even the *Law* cannot rule our emotions, let alone our racial concepts—as has recently been amply demonstrated—or even more so, our religious beliefs. Given a true missing-link anywhere along the middle part of the chain that evolutionists state links Man to Non-Man, and the fat will be in the fire, for everybody is going to be presented with a *real* problem for once and one that each will have to solve for himself. And simply ignoring it is not going to do any good either, because it goes to the very roots of our *faith*, and only God, we believe, can vouchsafe us an answer to that.

But, you may well, and probably will say, this is all unimportant because we have caught any such creature and *you* have no reason to suppose that any such exists, or ever existed. This is a splendid ostrich-like attitude and it *could* work out but, may I remind you, our rivals are not a bunch of uneducated morons and *they* don't see it this way at all. To the contrary, they have investigated the now almost countless reports that such creatures *do* exist, and very widely over an enormous area of the earth's surface, and they feel from what they have read that the evidence is now sufficiently strong not only to warrant but to necessitate their doing something practical about it. They felt the same about the sputnik and they thereby gave us a nasty shock. They are now mumbling about the moon and land claims on Mars and so forth. They are investigating at this very moment a cure for certain forms of cancer that we have for many years, refused even to test, and they are grafting spare heads on to dogs. We, the public of the West —not any longer all our scientists, I am happy to report—may continue to laugh at these outlandish concepts; that is our prerogative, but if we do we must not cry or scream when one of them lands figuratively or actually in our laps. Above all, we of the Press, meaning publicists in general and of all grades and techniques of the Fourth Estate, should refrain fromill-considered ribaldry in such esoteric matters, for there are more things not only under both heaven and earth, but now also above the former than we ever imagined, and any one of them may at any time become of vital import to our very existence. Man, in fact, is breaking through, and the break-through is both cumulative and progressive.

The idea that some missing-links —ape-men, or men-apes; and the two latter are *not* the same*—are still running around in out-of-the-way parts of the world, and even in northern California, may sound hilariously funny to almost everybody but it is really a very grim matter for the reasons we have stated, and it concerns all of us very deeply. It is a time-bomb of proportions altogether more monumental than any fusion device that we currently have in storage for it could blow the mental guts out of us more readily and universally than any gadget could scatter our physical intestines. We ought to be at least interested.

What, specifically, has made the Russians interested?

This cannot be answered in precise terms, though there is no reason to suppose that they would not tell you in some detail if you went to

*See my The Monkey Kingdom, Hanover House, 1957.

Moscow and visited their institution there which is devoted to the study of this business. You might even get a reply to a written request, for they have nothing to hide and they were very cooperative with at least one individual whom I know, who *did* call upon them. Presumably they must have read, and seriously, all the published reports by almost everybody *not* a native of Nepal or Tibet who has visited those countries, and they have probably also read a fair-sized library of reports by people who have stumbled upon or investigated similar facts in quite a lot of other countries—East Africa, the Congo, West Africa, Assam, Burma, Sumatra, two areas in South America, certain unexplored parts of Central America like southern British Honduras, Alaska, British Columbia, and northern California. This is a fair geographical roster when it is added to the vast swathe of territory in Asia extending from the Pamirs, through Tibet and the inner Himalayas to Sikang *(not* Sinkiang) in China and thence north to the Republic of Mongolia.

This will probably come as a surprise to you but sub-human creatures, either small, normal man-sized, or immense, have been seriously reported from all these areas recently, and by such official people as Game Wardens, professional surveyors, and even that most prosaic and laconic of all breeds, bulldozer operators.

Of all this mass of reports only one has so far filtered through the press to humanity at large. This is a thing or a group of related things called, and quite erroneously as it now turns out, *The Abominable Snowman.* About this, reams have now been written and all sorts of fanciful illustrations have been published. The point has now come where we should face the *facts!*

First, let me just say that the delightful term the "abominable snowman" was coined by the famous British columnist, Henry Newman, of the *Calcutta Statesman* of India on receipt of a telegram from the leader of an early Everest exploratory expedition announcing the discovery of a line of mysterious humanoid foot-tracks in the snow just above the tree-line. Newman knows everything and his column has for half a century been amazing but he did not, as he gave to believe at that time, speak the language of the part of Tibet in which the tracks had been found. However, he went right ahead and translated the words "metch kangmi" in the telegram in this manner, as abominable snowman. (Actually, the telegraphist had further muddled the issue by mistranscribing *metch* for *metoh.)* But Newman was not far wrong for this term is applied to outcasts in Tibet and, I am told, should better be translated "filthy or dirty outcast". The reason is that there never has been any capital punishment in that country and murderers are simply turned out to fend for themselves for the rest of their lives while decent citizens not yet convicted of heinous crimes are forbidden to aid them in any way or even to speak to or of them. As a result, t h e s e wretches take to dwelling in caves, living on rats, insects and roots, while their lank, mongoloid hair grows to their shoulders and their clothing rots away.

There are such ex-delinquents all over Tibet. But the combination of the words *abominable* and *snowman* in the English language were too good for the press to pass up and they adopted them with the utmost gusto.

Actually there had been reports that some humanoid creature existed in the region of the border between Nepal and Tibet long before this incident but nobody had paid any attention to them. One of the very first was made by the British explorer Hugh Knight who, on one expedition, rode on a horse ahead of his

train, and happened to dismount for a rest in an open grassy place on the side of the mountains down among the massive rhododendron forests that clothe vast areas of this multi-million square mile area of unexplored territory and which plays such an important part in our story, as we shall see later. He happened to have made no noise and to have approached quietly so that he found himself—he says—almost face to face with a humanoid creature without clothes, with a yellowish skin covered in long hair, a mane, bent knees, and a prognathous jaw but, strangely, carrying a crude bow. This creature was watching some animals below on the mountainside with such intensity that he did not sense the intruder's presence. Knight watched, amazed, but the sub-human 'thing' suddenly hefted his weapon and rushed off down the slope.

This was in 1921. In 1925 a professional photographer named N. A. Tombazi, a member of the respected Royal Geographical Society of London, reported that he came upon a similar creature that was very ape-like which he watched at some distance pulling up dwarf rhododendron bushes at an altitude of 15,000 feet, nine miles from the Zemu Glacier.

Since Newman's famous "press release" almost every outsider who has been into inner Nepal and outer Tibet has had something to say on this subject and almost all have reported seeing foot-tracks in either fresh snow or mud, hearing strange cries, having boulders rolled down towards them, or having heard from the very sane and serious local inhabitants of the existence of these sub-human creatures. Few have made so bold as to report that they have encountered them face to face but there was an American Doctor on a Four-Point Program in Nepal a few years ago who says in print that, with a companion, he was surrounded by some such creatures though he alleged that they had tails.

And there the matter might have rested had it not happened that a lot of Britishers were determined to climb the highest mountain in the world and a few iconoclasts who take a fiendish delight in doubting the word of *any* "expert" had not persisted in resuscitating and republishing the statements of Forest Officers and other serious-minded persons who lived in and about these areas and who had made similar reports.

The result of these two—to many people—aggravating circumstances and the actions of their afficionados, combined with Newman's delightful "translation," was that the Fourth Estate simply would not let the matter drop. The only trouble is that the heartly thing turns out not to be a "myth" but a distressing reality.

In the meantime—and I speak of the decades 1930 to 1950—little was heard of this business. Whole or complete Man, or whatever we now have to call ourselves, was otherwise preoccupied and especially in Europe. Up till this time, moreover, America had not yet heard of this abomination although two Americans had reported being yelled at by "something" while on an expedition to the inner Himalaya and having found a cairn on a superior mountain-top moved, and of having been told that Yeti—not Metoh Kangmi, be it noted—had done this. In fact, this is one of the earliest records of the proper Sherpa name for the sub-men. In 1948 this writer spoke of this abominable business to Ken Purdy then editor of *True* Magazine. He also became fascinated by Newman's nomenclature and published an article on the subject, the first introduction of the subject to this country.

Meantime, however, all manner of distressing, to many, other corollary matters had come to light. Two very serious-minded, respected and expe-

rienced men in East Africa—S.V. Cook and Capt. W. Hichens—stated flatly that they had come face to face with little man-like creatures in that country. Reports of a thing called the *Tok* or "Mouth Man" came out of Burma; a little fellow with shy habits called the *Orang Pendek* or simply "Little Man" turned up in Sumatra. There was also a positive outburst in a most unexpected quarter, namely, the strip of mountain forests from Canadian Alaska to northern California in the form of a rather monstrous hairy character called by the Amerindians the "Sasquatch." The details of these and several other like items I will go into my next article.

The situation today in regard to this whole matter is really amazing. It has not yet become "common knowledge" though there has been an increasing amount about it in the press and not a little in magazines. The public as a whole is not aware of its very existence, yet it is rapidly becoming a matter of international interest and possibly of "cold-war" significance. An enormous amount of money and energy is going into investigation of the matter and, as we have said, it has hair-raising undertones—perhaps even overtones.

There is no longer any doubt but that these creatures are to be found and studied—if not caught or killed —and that they are very widely distributed. I will name in my next article half-a-dozen expeditions which are currently in the field searching for them or for evidence of them, and these are not crackpot, starry-eyed, one-man outfits. They are all either fully-trained scientific field organizations like those of the Russians already mentioned, or composed of very experienced and patient investigators.

There are also professional animal collectors devoting almost whole time to the business, one of whom happens to be an associate of mine and who was a virulent if not "professional" sceptic until his last trip, after which he wrote me, and I quote, "I am now more convinced than ever and I am going back to do it myself." I will tell you later who he is, where he is, why he is thus converted, and why he says that he is going back "to do it himself" this time, and by that time I may have first-hand reports from him as to what he has found.

This race for the *Yeti*, the *Orang Pendek*, the *Sasquatch* (on which I happen personally to be engaged at the time of writing), and others, including those delightful entities so well-known to the human inhabitants of Mongolia as *Almas* that the local people have promised to produce some this fall for the Russian scientists, is now on at full blast. It is one of the greatest news stories of all time and I want to tell you more about it. I will name those who are engaged in it; quote for you the actual reports of those who have over the years, patiently brought this matter to light, and I will tell you—with photographs—what has so far been discovered. The story, I can assure you, so amazing as almost to warrant that abominable prefix, *sensational.*

This is a race to capture the very soul of humanity indeed! And in one corner we have the organized might of Russia which can call upon a multitude of scientists and order them to go look almost anywhere, while in the other corner is a little band of what I can only call gallant men, all but one or two without even funds, derided and scoffed at by public, press, and organized science alike, who have to battle through mountains of red-tape as well as rhododendrons to the airy peaks of discovery. We ought to rally behind these rugged individualists and give them a boost in the name of freedom and free enterprise.

HUMAN AURIC EMANATIONS

by VAN ROWE

TODAY, in every field of technological investigation many kinds of strange looking instruments are in operation—detecting, recording, then analyzing; ...ion clickings... earth rumblings...stellar whistlings ...even marine gossip.

It will probably always take a certain period for gestation proceeding formal recognition of any new method which attempts to expose other dimensions to our already bewildered brains. Such periods certainly occurred with the announcement of those devices which technicians now use to detect emissions from microorganisms on earth; and from macrotoids in space.

What follows is an attempt to present the many findings of those investigators who have been engaged in the detection and analyzation of auric emanations, connected with the human organism.

Of this "other dimension"...we can be sure that the end of the period of gestation for *its* exposure, is ...today...

It has been said, that hardly one out of every ten thousand persons is in any way aware that he or she is surrounded by an atmosphere or aura of tenuous matter. This invisible envelope is intimately connected with the organism and reflects within its structure the individual's mental and emotional attitudes by corresponding undulating unseen colours.

Some early dramatic occurrences of the aura have been recorded in the scriptures. In the Horeb mountains, in Arabia, about 1500 B.C., the children of Israel were unable to look upon Moses when he descended from Mt. Sinai bearing the stone tablets because of a brilliant light which surrounded his person. In 36 A.D. Saul (St. Paul) was on his way to Damascus to persecute the disciples of Jesus, and when just outside the city he was arrested by a miraculous light, so intense as to deprive him of sight. During this auric experience his conversion took place and sight

was restored. Again the transfiguration of Jesus Christ upon Mount Hermon; at which time Moses and Elijah appeared to him; his raiment shown so brightly to the three Apostles looking on that "no fuller on earth could whiten it."

Many of the saints of the middle ages were seen to be enveloped in a halo of light. St. Charles Borromeo and St. Philip Neri were purported to have been constantly and visibly illuminated. We are told also that whenever St. John was kneeling in prayer, a peculiar brightness shown forth from his face. Esoteric students tell us that this extraordinary phenomena results from many years of spiritual aspiration. It is at such times of lofty thought that the transparent auric colours constantly playing out round the physical body become more translucent, luminous and discernible.

The halo or nimbus representing the spiritual auric rays was portrayed in all forms of Christian art compassing the heads of sacred personages. Of course most of the renderings of the auric glow were of an imitative period style, certainly not every artist witnessed first-hand emanations from the saintly features he was about to paint.

In the sixteenth century, Theophrastus Boombastus von Hohenheim, a Swiss alchemist and physician (better known as Philippus Aureolus Paracelsus), made the following observations concerning existence of the human aura: The "vital force is not inclosed in man, but radiates round him like a luminous sphere, and it may be made to act at a distance." It may poison the essence of life and cause diseases or it (the imagination) may purify it (the essence) after it has been made impure, and restore the health." He expressed the idea that "...thoughts are simply magnetic emanations, which, in escaping from our brains, penetrate into kindred heads and carry thither, ...a reflection of our life, the mirage of our secrets." Paracelsus clearly shows his belief in thought and astral projection together with an attitude towards health somewhat kindred to psychosomatic concepts in medicine today.

Persons possessing the developed faculty of clairvoyance, or second-sight have always contended that they could see the aura. Though they also asserted that auric emanations surround some inorganic materials.

Around the turn of the century occultists were beginning to outline more intelligible principles concerning the function and nature of the auric atmosphere. Piecing together the many loose fragments of information, disclosed through the efforts of so-called "sensitives," the construction and nature of the human aura is presented as: "...a highly complicated and entangled manifestation, consisting of many influences operating within the same area." The properly trained psychic, it is said, can: "...make a complete analysis of the various elements in the aura, and can estimate the delicate tints of which it is composed—though all blended together—as if each were seen separately." To better understand how the aura is "made-up," it has often been suggested that the aura or "cloud round the body" should not be taken to mean anything different or separate from the person himself. But, that "...man lives on the various planes in such garments as befit each, and all these garments or bodies interpenetrate each other; the lowest and smallest of these is called 'the body,' ...the mixed substances of the other garments are called the aura when they extend beyond that (physical) body."

Theosophical literature records the number of the finer "garments" of a man, as seven. But assures us that there are very few clairvoyants who

Predominantly red, with rays of bright yellow. Represents an angry thought of an explosive kind.

Dull red, flashing from cloudy brown. This thought form, we are told, darted out from the aura of a rough, half-drunken man as he raised his hand to strike a woman.

Bright yellow, almost orange. A thought taken from the aura of a man ambitious to wield power for the public good.
(All three examples, illustrated above, were published in the eighteen-nineties.....)

are able to perceive more than four of the auras belonging to our "higher" subtler bodies having their "anchor," so to speak, in the dense physical body. Certain oriental schools contain teachings relating to these "other vehicles" of man; whereby after many years of strenuous and coordinated "physio-religio" work the student may come to an understanding of how to make contact with his next "higher body," and use it to "travel" upon its "astral" plane.

Much confusion has arisen concerning descriptions of the "vehicles" or "higher bodies" comprising the human aura, this is mainly due to certain careless translations from the Sanskrit texts. Often, the sutlety of oriental ideology escape the translator's attention, enabling only fragmentary reconstruction of involved concepts as auric bodies. Simply, the human aura consists of the:

1. Physical body: Smallest of all the auric bodies; to function in the ordinary Physical Plane.

2. Etheric Double: Slightly larger physical body; composed of tenuous etheric matter; to function also in the Physical Plane.

3. Emotional or "Astral" body: Larger still, to function in the Astral or "Starry" Plane.

4. Mental or Intellectual body: May extend a few feet around the physical body; to function in the Mental Plane.

5. Spiritual or "Buddhic" body: Extends many feet beyond the confines of the physical body; to function in the Spiritual Plane.

6. & 7. Composed of higher spiritual matter; given obscure Sanskrit names; alluded to in western occultism, but scarcely defined; to function in the two uppermost Planes.

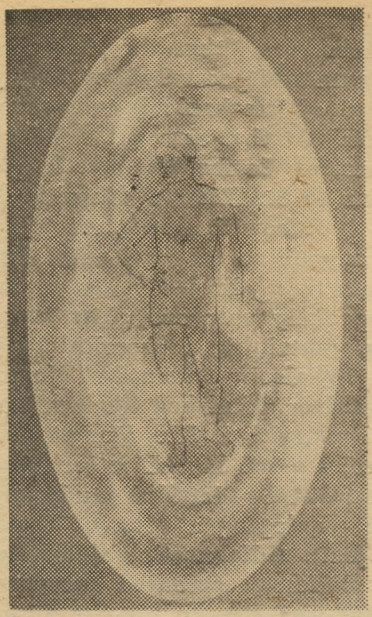
Yogis and occult seers have informed western medicine that there are seven etheric "centers" or "vor-

tices" situated in certain areas within our physical anatomy. These "spinning centers" are interrelated with their organic counterparts, viz., in the regions of the sacral; spleen; navel; cardiac; throat; pituitary and pineal glands; and the anterior fontanelle. It should be noted that these centers or Chakrams are the sense organs of the Etheric Double, and are in close proximity to the glands of the Endocrine system. In other words, our higher Emotional and Mental bodies are affected by, and exert profound influences upon the four major physiological systems of the physical body, by way of the Chakrams of the Etheric Double. The Double "...plays the part of a conductor, and...a bridge between the physical and astral bodies," via the etheric chakrams; the endocrine glands; and hormones.

Other clairvoyant observations include; that during sleep it does not leave the physical body as the astral body is supposed to do; and that anaesthetics take affect in the human organism due to driving out the greater part of the Double. This breaks emotional communication with the astral body, resulting in non-experience of pain. In India there are many who are able to become immune to pain as a result of special yoga study. Those who support the idea of higher bodies, generally agree that the only sane way for a man to come into conscious contact with his higher "vehicles" beginning with the astral plane, is to start with purifying his everyday body, by diet, and through arduous physical and mental exercises over a long period of time, under the guidance of a guru. The aim—to create a continuous reaction of consciousness within all of the etheric centers; and at the same time "expanding" the individual "being" so as to become in constant touch with its other "sheaths," through these etheric connections or Chakrams.

There have been quite a number of investigators of psychic phenomena during recent years who have attempted to explain automatic writing; planchette devices; thought form and telepathic projection; and even spiritualism itself, by the idea that at times the Mental, Emotional and Etheric auric bodies are able to partially manifest in the physical plane. In the early years a Dr. Ashburnes, in his *Spiritualism Chemically Explained,* tells that the "human body is a condensation of gases, which constantly exude from the skin in invisible vapour; that the fingers coming in contact with the planchette transmit to it an 'odic force,' and thus set it in motion." He continues to say that some people have certain chemicals in excess in their system and that the vapour "thus exuded forms a positively living, thinking, acting body, capable of directing a pencil."

The "odic force" theory was published by a world famous "industrialist-chemist in the mid-nineteenth century. His name was Baron von Reichenbach discoverer of creosote and paraffin, and his experiments attracted the attention of many other scientific minds of his day, including Alexander von Humboldt. He asserted that there is a universal "odic force" which permeates organic as well as inorganic life. By repeated and controlled dark room sessions, he concluded that the "odic force" can be seen as an "aura" surrounding everything in varying degrees of colour and intensity. The essential element in all of his experiments were "sensitives," hundreds of them throughout the years. These "gifted" persons generally agreed that a "cool blue aura" exuded from one end of large mountain crystal, but from its base emanated auric rays of warm yellow. The Baron conducted many other tests with his "sensitives," and



The aura of the average man. There is a faint hint of that exceedingly delicate violet which implies capacity of devotion turned towards the highest ideal...

found that the poles of horseshoe magnets give off a very noticeable aura. As Reichenbach travelled the large cities in search of additional "sensitives," he gradually came to know what traits to look for in people around him to aid his finding a worthy subject. Some of these characteristics, according to the Baron, are; those who favor sleeping on their right side; a dislike for yellow; a fondness for blue; those who shun crowds and social gatherings; a preference for lighter type diets; including many other qualities too numerous to mention here.

Hereward Carrington, a notable figure in modern psychical research, seems to have accepted these findings when he states that; "any one, possessing even moderate psychic development" may see the aura given off by magnets and crystals, "if they observe these objects when in a darkened room."

Where Baron von Reichenback said that his "odic force" could not be photographed; early twentieth century investigators claimed that they had photographed "something" which they called, "thought-form" projections. This was said to have been accomplished by placing unopened photographic plates near or in the hands of a person, who was to concentrate and project a thought image in the direction of the sensitive plate. Upon unwrapping and developing, the plates were found in many cases to be emblazoned with clearly outlined foggy "forms," said to resemble the pictures "sent" by the participant. Dr. Ochorowicz, researcher in "radiographics," and Commandant Darget, engaged in thought photography and the so-called "V-rays," were two prominent "explorers" into this unusual but significant area of human auric investigations.

Mrs. Annie Besant, the eminent occultist/writer, said, "Such a thought-form, if directed to affect

The Health-Aura, clearly visible to the clairvoyant as a mass of faintly luminous violet grey mist....

any object or person on the astral or physical planes, will pass from the mental into the astral world, and will take to itself a covering of astral materials, of fineness correlated to its own, from the elemental essence of the astral world."

Mrs. Besant interrogated many clairvoyants to determine the correspondences between the shapes and their colours of the projected thought-forms, and to the mental and emotional attitudes. She found that: The outburst of anger will charge the entire astral auric with "deep red flashes" on a dark ground, while sudden horror will immediately change the same to a "ghastly grey." Kindred thoughts may be of the same colour but also in forms appropo with their nature of purpose. The thought form of anger appears to the clairvoyant as a "stiletto-like dart"; yellow "stars" and other geometrical shapes are concerned with metaphysics; "flower" forms with "upward pointing petals of azure flames" signify deep devotion to someone; a pencil-like form filled with slender blue "rays" which shoot upwards from the aureola, mean religious devotion; a reaction to jealousy issues a cloud-like form which "comes rolling out, suffusing the whole aura."

There are times when interpretation of the auric colours has saved lives. One such incident was related by Edgar Cayce, the famous psychic of Virginia. He told of a woman who could see auric colours, and one day she decided against entering an elevator. The reason: The passengers all lacked auras. The doors closed, cables snapped, and the elevator plunged to the basement killing the occupants.

Quite naturally, any and all such related experiences and clairvoyant attempts to delve into the "unseen" aura surrounding us, were most sullenly looked upon by the scientific cliques of the times.

It was not until 1911, Dr. Carrington observes, "that the existence of the aura was proved scientifically by means of mechanical and chemical means." At that time a Dr. Walter J. Kilner, of Cambridge, and late electrician to St. Thomas' Hospital, London, "...showed that it was possible for anyone to see the aura, issuing from a living human being, by means of specially prepared glass slides or cells, containing a chemical coal tar dye in alcohol, named "Dicyanin." Dr. Kilner published his findings in his book, titled, *The Human Atmosphere,* one of his objectives was to show that by detailed study of the aura enveloping a person, "that this will have a diagnostic value." By using different coloured screens Dr. Kilner was able to see the aura and to observe three distinct parts, which he termed: The Etheric Double; The Inner Aura; The Outer Aura. A haze could sometimes be seen to extend outwards for a long distance beyond the Outer Aura. The auras are best viewed in a diffused light, with usually a black background twelve inches behind the nude patient, as the aura cannot be seen through the clothing. The operator looks through a dark coloured "screen" at the light for a minute, and then observes the subject through a pale one.

The Etheric Double appeared; as a dark band, with a width of one-sixteenth to three-sixteenths of an inch following the contours of the physical body; quite transparent; clearly striated with self-luminous delicate rose/blue lines tinting the areas between striations.

The Inner Aura appeared; commencing from the outer edge of the Etheric Double; with a definite crenated perimeter, having a width of two to four inches; often narrower at the limbs; wide in children than adults; having a granular structure tending to be striated; the most dense of all the auras with no colour

apparent.

The Outer Aura appeared; from just inside the outer edge of the Inner Aura; its width varying from two inches about the shoulders and up to five inches at the back and sides of the trunk; following bodily contours; narrower at lower limbs; in certain cases it projects a great distance out from the finger tips; has a vague outline; is nebulous with a finer granular composition as it fades off into space.

Dr. Kilner's profound observations through his chemical screens also uncovered these facts; That the most perfect and healthy form for the "Human Atmosphere" to take, is an "egg-shaped" oval; that Rays and Patches, oft times of a brilliant hue, suddenly project from one part of the body to another, and from the Inner Aura out beyond the entire human aura; that these Rays, Patches and their colours can be formed and directed by an effort of will; changes in texture, shape and colours of the auras were found due to cases of hysteria, epilepsy and other grave maladies; that the many manifestations occurring within the Inner Aura appear not to create kindred reactions within the Outer Aura, signifying "that the two Auras are most probably not products of one and the same force."

As we can see, many of Dr. Kilner's findings agree with those obtained through clairvoyants.

It is not mere speculation to say that additional subtle workings of the human organism might be discovered, if Dr. Kilner's methods are improved upon by present day critical auric investigators:— Who may not concur completely with that distinguished authority, Hereward Carrington, when he says: In this way the sceptical world has been convinced of the reality of the human aura, and it is now considered a proved scientific fact."

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Woodroffe, Sir John

LIFE FORM FROM OUTER SPACE

by MARLA BAXTER

"...and let them (man) have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air and over the cattle and over all the earth...." Gen. 1:26

ON SEPTEMBER 8th and 9th of 1958, my husband, Howard Menger, obtained some of the most fascinating and startling movie film yet procured.

One afternoon, as Howard was coming out of the local post office, he was confronted by an amiable young man casually dressed in a light tan jacket and dark trousers. He had light brown hair, a ruddy complexion and alert eyes. He smilingly spoke the code word to Howard, which Howard recognized immediately as one of the means of identification between friends and helpers of the visitors from other planets. The message given Howard was brief and to the point. It would be "arranged" for Howard to take some movies of spacecraft soon.

"You will receive a phone call and the code phrase. You will then be directed to the location where the films can be taken. If you will place this filter over the lens of your movie camera, you will obtain better results." The young man handed Howard a flat, round purplish blue glass filter with the suggestion that Howard return the filter to him at their next meeting. The two men smiled, shook hands and parted.

Howard slipped the filter into his pocket and watched as the young man walked jauntily down the street and disappeared around the corner.

A few days later my husband received a phone call and the voice at the other end gave the code phrase followed by directions to go to a certain area in the Blue Mountains of Pennsylvania (about 70 miles from our farm).

On the afternoon of the eighth, Howard left for Pennsylvania alone and with an inexpensive eight mm. movie camera and a Polaroid Land

camera. He did not return until late that night, tired, hungry and elated. (Howard always seems to return from a "contact" with these people, happy and excited.) He told me he had driven to the Blue Mountains somewhere near Mt. Effort, where he had taken a dirt road into the mountains and finally when it was impossible to drive any further, got out and walked the rest of the way, through woods and underbrush, until he came to a clearing, where he had been directed. It was here in this lonely isolated spot that he got some sensational movies, not only of spacecraft, but of...something else!

While Howard ate his dinner he showed me some polaroid shots he had taken of disc-shaped craft. They were not close-ups as he had previously taken, so I was not too impressed.

He then told me about the movie film he had taken of spacecraft and hoped he would get it developed in time for the First East Coast Space Convention.

We telephoned a friend of ours out of state who came in the next day to pick up the film, as he knew of a concern in New York who could give twenty-four-hour service in developing movie film. This was the first time that Howard had relinquished a movie film of space-craft to anyone, other than his own contacts, and he specifically asked the person not to look at the film before it was safely delivered.

He explained to our friend that there was something on that film that had to be deleted and that was the reason he had to edit the film first before showing it.

Two days later the film was delivered and Howard retired to his den with it. About ten minutes later he slowly came down the stairs and entered the living room. He appeared somewhat shaken, but smiling enigmatically, he said,

This was the Saucer from which the Life Form came.

"This film is...is too much. Some of it is just unbelievable. Ths space craft filmed is, to the best of my knowledge, the best yet obtained... but there is something in this film that cannot be shown at present. I have already cut a certain section of the film and I will have to do some more editing before it can be shown. I photographed something that is not a space craft. It might do more harm than good by showing the film, people might misunderstand and become frightened."

By this time our curiosity was thoroughly aroused and we prevailed upon Howard to show us the film and point out to us what was not a space craft and indicate to us what could be interpreted as fearsome. He hesitated for a while, as he lit and relit his pipe, then he set up the screen and projected the film onto the screen.

The scenes we saw were taken late afternoon on a clear, warm day in a clearing in the middle of the pine woods. Over the tops of the trees and sometimes behind and between them, we could see a cloud-like form, turbulent and gaseous, which finally took shape as a shining bluish metallic disc, which moved back and forth. The next scene showed the same craft with the ionized field particles around speeded up so that it looked like a disc-shaped and pulsating gelatinous substance, shimmering and alive. It hovered in an undulating motion as if it were trying to remain in view while the camera was trained on it. The next moment we saw a round, black object bobbing behind a tree, as if playing hide and seek. When it emerged from behind the trees, its form was changed so that it looked like a huge blob of white substance, pulsating and swimming about and seemingly changing shape. The thing projected a tentacle that went in and out of the main body and seemed to have something to do with its direction. The next shape that it assumed was a large flat circle, looking for all the world, like a huge fried egg; the center in this case was bright, blood red. This odd mass contracted and expanded as if breathing. Its movement was strange; it seemed to bob up and down and go forward and backward as if swimming or floating in water. This was obviously no space craft. It was like nothing we had ever seen before. Above this strange creature, was a huge space craft from which the thing had been dropped. There were a few feet of film of this huge craft in the latter part of the film—a large dark disc with lights all around like portholes.

When Howard had finished showing us the film, he went on to explain what we had seen.

"That was a life form brought here by the space people. They dropped it from the craft (we had seen the small round dark object ejected from the underside of the craft) to see if it could survive and live in this atmosphere. They told me that this life form comes from another planet, which is no longer suitable for them and are fast becoming extinct. The 'visitors' are therefore trying to find some planet or place where they can live and propagate. When they are dropped from the ship, they are tight, compact spores but when they hit the atmosphere they begin to grow. The one I photographed started out as a small, round object about the size of a basketball and as soon as it hit the air it began to grow in size and shape to what you saw on the screen, which was about ten feet across. Believe me, I did not expect to see this unusual sight and I have to admit—I was afraid—especially after what finally happened.

"I watched the thing as it moved behind the trees and changed shape and then it began to descend slowly till it was on the ground, about fif-

Craft landing outside of Heber, Utah.

teen or twenty feet from where I stood. There it remained for a few seconds, a shapeless mass of pulsating life, then it started to move toward me, creeping or crawling, or whatever it *was* doing. I felt like running, but watched fascinated and continued to take pictures. I noticed that to the rear of the thing, where it had just passed over, the grass and weeds were dead, burned brown as if singed by fire. As if this was not enough, a hapless rabbit darted out from the edge of the woods directly into the path of the oncoming blob. The rabbit stopped short and in a split second it was dead, remaining motionless in the same sitting position as if it were a carven image. I stopped photographing at this point, it was too much and I felt the cold sweat trickle down my back. Then a strange thing happened, the thing seemed to be aware of the rabbit and began to withdraw slowly. It had retreated several feet, when it went straight up into the air about twenty feet where it was encompassed by a bluish ray. It followed along this ray in an upward direction toward the waiting craft, condensing in size and shape, until it was the same, small black ball it was when originally released from the underside of the craft. It disappeared into the craft and you have no idea how glad I was to see it returned from whence it came.

"When my space friends discovered that I had not left the area and had possibly photographed something I should not have seen, they quickly landed and it was suggested that I either destroy that portion of the film, or at least, not show it for the present. This is why you didn't see all this. My space friends later told me that had I moved toward it and had come too close, I could have been harmed, as the rabbit had been. Yet, the form was not actually harmful in intent and the killing of the rabbit was accidental. They assured me that these life forms would not be brought to earth again. This had been a purely experimental try. It was obvious that they could not live here without destroying our life forms, and so an effort would be made to place them elsewhere. They are, I was told, the highest evolved life form of their particular specie. Whatever that life form was, it had reached a certain stage of development, and according to them, it was the highest intelligence attainable in a one-celled life form. The planet on which they live is a plant and mineral world, where no other life forms exist other than these creatures and similar ones to them in structure."

(Perhaps it is obvious from this statement that the planet from which they came must have been a "controlled" or "stabilized" area of long standing to continue to produce this one-celled creature without any

structural or evolutionary change.)

"This creature," Howard went on, "grows, matures and reproduces. When it is young, the nucleus is light yellow in color, and as it matures, it changes from orange to red and finally in maturity and just before it propagates, the center is purple. It reproduces by cell division."

Howard paused and emptied his pipe and proceeded to refill it. We sat there for a while, silent. I have to admit my first reaction was one of horror, most of all because an animal had been destroyed. "If your space friends are so intelligent how could they allow such a horrible thing to occur? Surely, they must have known that this—this thing was harmful to us?"

"Marla, we kill rabbits and small animals every day on our highways and surely it is not intentional. Many times it is unavoidable. You know yourself that quite a few times we have had to practically stop the car and let a rabbit get its bearing and get off the road. They seem to have an uncanny sense just when to jump out in front of an oncoming car, and sometimes it is too late to stop. Don't you see, this life form from outer space did not intend to hurt the rabbit, in fact, it withdrew when the rabbit ran in front of it. And even if it had not stopped, it was under constant surveillance by the craft above. Something in its chemical life processes is harmful to our life forms, but it is not harmful intentionally. They'd rather become extinct than deliberately hurt us."

However, I was not so easily calmed and *not* just because I objected to a microbe creature from outer space having "higher intelligence than the intelligence on this earth."

Howard looked perturbed, "This is why I did not want to show this section of the film. You are my wife and look at your reaction to what I've just told you. What would be the reaction of the general public if they were to see the entire film?"

Our friend had been silently listening and finally came to Howard's defense, "Marla, I know how you feel about animals but you are letting your feelings overshadow the importance of this film. This is the most sensational film I have ever seen. After all, there is a possibility of other life forms in the upper atmosphere and in space of which we know nothing, and I am sure that our visitors would not bring anything here that would prove harmful to this planet."

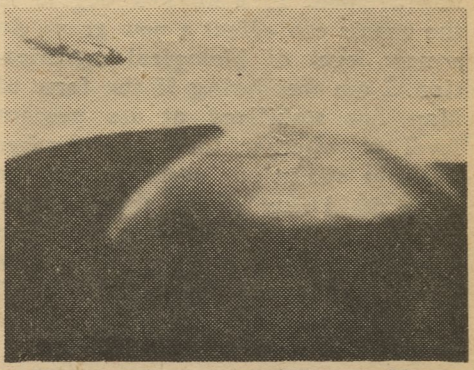
"Well, anyway, this settles it," said Howard, "I am not showing the life form in the film. I'll cut out those frames also, at once."

For a few days Howard avoided the subject; however, I did not let the matter rest. Over and over again in my mind's eye I visualized what I had seen and tried to determine what it could mean. I started to do a little research and some investigation on my own. To all intents and purposes this extra-terrestrial life form bore a striking similarity to a microbe, which in its dormant state remains as a spore (seed ball) until it comes into contact with the moisture of our atmosphere, where it "explodes" into life and proceeds to grow and seek food. The microbe needs moisture and protein substance upon which to feed, therefore, it is my opinion that this "macrobe" took moisture and protein from the air, from the grass (where it came in contact with the ground) and from any life form in its path. In the case of the rabbit which ran in front of it the macrobe drew from it the life essence, instantly, probably by dissolving the blood; in other words the protein and moisture of the blood was absorbed immediately. Please bear in mind that this is the natural life processes of a microbe and could not be inter-

preted as evil intent. whether the macrobe was plant or animal, I do not know, it could have been the borderline organism between the two. Also, the fact that it sent out tentacles and feelers to become aware of its surroundings, and the way it moved, as if swimming, rather than flying, points to a life form similar to a microbe. The more I thought of it the more inclined I was to think of it as a huge interspatial one-celled microbe, whose normal processes would be to absorb moisture and food from the atmosphere, and in its environment would be no more harmful than the minute microbes we view under our strongest microscopes.

Living matter (animal organisms) for all their varieties and complexities, consist of the same sort of substances that compose the non-living (plant organisms) world. Under the general classification of algae, we find the simplest one-celled plant; under the heading of protozoa, we find the simplest one-celled animal. A microbe, or virus is a borderline organism between the living and non-living (plant and animal).... Crystallized virus or seed spores can survive in alien atmosphere, if surrounded by coverings that cannot be readily penetrated, until returned to more adaptable surroundings where, with moisture and energy particles, they can proceed to grow, feed and reproduce. Active living organisms require an environment propitious to their life processes and where they can establish consciously or unconsciously cooperation in their organizational development. Various kinds of protozoans increase their rate of sexless reproduction (cell division) if a certain number of them are present, rather than too many or too few. This may have been the early beginnings of sexual reproduction. Some protozoans tend to stay together in colonies after reproduction,

Closeup of moon, showing mountains and clouds.



Craft landing near building on Moon.

and these are the early beginnings of cooperation* that may have started the evolution of the many-celled higher animals. Evolution takes place more rapidly when a group of organisms is broken up into small breeding units; if a favorable variation or modification occurs in struc-

*The functioning of modern organization calls for cooperation rather than self-centered disoperative methods, such as aggressiveness. This should be the theme of our entire civilization—cooperation—if we are to continue to exist, or we shall become extinct as any other useless and non-adaptable life form.

ture or adaptation, the emigrants can carry the evolved improvements to neighboring units.

In evolution, species go through various changes of adaptation and specialization and sooner or later reach a point where the form stabilizes on a particular level. For instance, the horse for the past million or so years, has more or less stabilized into its present form with minor variations of the basic theme evolving into the zebra, wild ass and true horse. In fact, the great majority of animals and plant groups, large and small are somewhat restricted in their continued evolutionary process after becoming stabilized at a particular level of biological organization; however, they may continue to evolve in their particular level by producing new variations on their basic theme.

Occasionally, such variations that will produce specific advance and improvement to a marked degree in the specie can effect a new group on a new level of biological organization. I am wondering if the form of Man has stabilized at its present level or whether there are further steps in evolution; variations in the basic mold may occur, that is true, but out of Man will there come yet another form—a new group, a new specie that cannot be called "Man," but must be placed in another category?

Now, in addition to the transmission of biological genetics (the cumulative physical inherited tendencies and characteristics), man transmits to posterity cumulative systems of knowledge, ideas and attitudes—or psycho-social evolution. Man is at the point now when he can consciously direct desirable genetic changes, such as health, intelligence, special qualities, etc., by intellectual guidance. Man as a psycho-social or mental creature, is still on the low rung of his evolutionary climb upwards. His next step forward will be in the spiritual awareness of himself and his ecological relationship to All Life.

We have only dealt with the evolutionary and biological concepts of this one planet, yet there is no doubt in my mind that there are similar *and* different cycles of evolution elsewhere. It is known that variations in environment will produce variations in development, and that in cases of extreme environmental change, such as X-rays, ultra-violet radiation, atomic and hydrogen radiation, specific chemicals produced by these rays can and do effect the chemical structure of the genes, which in turn produce modification and mutants in the species. Is it possible that, due to atomic blasts, the upper atmosphere has become the spawning ground for mutant life forms or is it equally possible that, due to the explosive break-through of our ionosphere, some upper level creatures have come down to our atmosphere (troposphere), in much the same way that detonations in the Pacific Ocean have brought up deep sea life heretofore unknown in the upper levels of the ocean? We are not sure of which the foregoing treats of, but this you can be certain, it brears investigation by competent biologists. Somewhere out there in space the interspatial microbe has its function in the ecological balance of nature and is fulfilling its purpose.

I no longer fear this strange visitor because, when viewed less emotionally, it obviously also has its purpose in the omnipresence of Life, and Howard has been privileged to bear witness to these wonders of space and life. Perhaps the visitors from other planets are more fully aware of this omnipresence of Life and its many expressions and do not view with horror and suspicion those expressions of life which to them are alien.

There is a definite ecological pattern throughout the fantastic universe, and, while, we on earth have admitted to the purpose and function of all other species in the balance of nature, Man, alone, has yet to discover his place and purpose in the scheme of things. This is the one great message of our visitors from outer space...that Man has purpose and, whether or not the ecology of Man is at present discussed in biological circles, mankind *is* the seeder of the universe. It is he, who is the emigrant to distant planets bringing improvements, adaptations, and more advanced life forms to planets which are ready in their evolutionary scale to receive these improvements. This is the reason for sudden upsurges in evolution—ethnical and cultural developments of a specie, race, or planet. This is man's ecological nature—that he is the sower, the reaper, and the colonizer; thus he has his place in the grand plan of evolution.

NOTE: Permission to use the material relating to the films and informaton about the life form from outer space, was finally granted by Howard Menger after months of persuasion by his wife, Marla Baxter.

TWO THOUSAND YEARS OF SPACE TRAVEL

(*continued from page* 88)

One of the earliest space suit illustrations and certainly the first to show women's styles in this department. A drawing by R. Vincrot, who illustrated (in 1889) *the two-volume* Adventures Extraordinaries d'un Savant Russe *of G. Le Faure and H. de Graffigny. The characters were shot to the moon from a cannon similar to that described by Jules Verne.*

Planet, involving interstellar voyages; and last but not least the remarkable two volume illustrated French work by collaborators G. Le Faure & H. de Graffigny titled respectively *The Savant Russe* and *Le Soleil te les Petites Planetes*. The first volume is a trip to the moon and the second a trip to the asteroids. The ship is shot from a cannon like Verne's and features clearly drawn space suits which are unusually advanced for their period.

Note: The illustrations are from the private collection of the author.

Two thousand Years of SPACE TRAVEL

by SAM MOSKOWITZ

SINCE HIS most primitive days, man has gazed at the moon and the stars and speculated endlessly as to their nature and meaning. When civilization advanced to the point where there were written languages, these conjectures were recorded by scribes on parchment.

Observations that the moon may actually be another inhabited world like our own appear in Greek writings, specifically those of Anaximander, Philolaus and Plutarch. Lucian of Samosata, a Syrian who wrote in Greek is generally credited with writing the first interplanetary speculations. He penned two tales of trips to the moon, *The True History* and *Icaro-Menippus,* both in within a 50 year period after his birth, which was estimated to have occurred about 125 A. D.

Before Lucian, the Travel Tale, as best exemplified by Homer's *Odyssey* enjoyed great popularity. Literally thousands of such adventures were written, of which relatively few survive today. A large part of those tales were, in the purest sense, what we today would term as science fiction. The world outside the Mediterranean basin was unexplored. The extent of the continents and the oceans were unknown. All an author had to do to create the atmosphere for imaginative romance was to embark by ocean or trek by land just a few hundred miles beyond the boundaries of the cradle of civilization and *anything* was possible.

With so vast, so unlimited an horizon for adventure, other worlds than ours were completely extraneous when it came to the exercise of human imagination. There may have been a number of stories about trips to the moon before Lucian's day, but record of only one has been found. That one is said to have been included in a collection of travel stories by the Greek philosopher Antonius Diogenes (famed searcher with the lamp for an honest man) titled *Of Wonderful Things Beyond Thule.*

The belief that some birds, when they leave the northern lands for the winter, might hibernate in the moon led Francis Godwin in his book Man in the Moone, *to construct a device in his narrative whereby Domingo Gonsales, the leading character, was carried to the moon by a flock of birds called Gansas. An attempt was made to lend scientific conviction to the passage.*

Cyrano de Bergerac was more than a character in Rostand's famous play. He lived and wrote scientific excursions which brought him fame. In his unfinished novel, Voyage to the Sun, *he proposed the space ship shown. Power was derived from the rays of the sun shining upon concave mirrors which united the rays in the center of a globe. The resulting heat caused expansion of the air in the globe, forcing it to stream out through a vent. The reaction drove the vessel onward. The sail was for power failure or emergency steering.*

The trip to the moon was achieved by traveling far enough North overland. No copy of this tale, which was written centuries before Lucian, is known to exist.

Nevertheless, this *walk* to the moon by Diogenes points up the fact that interplanetary stories are merely an imaginative extension of the old Travel Tales, with another globe instead of an unexplored area of sea or land as a locale. In this sense, ancestry of the interplanetary story is one of the oldest of all literary themes.

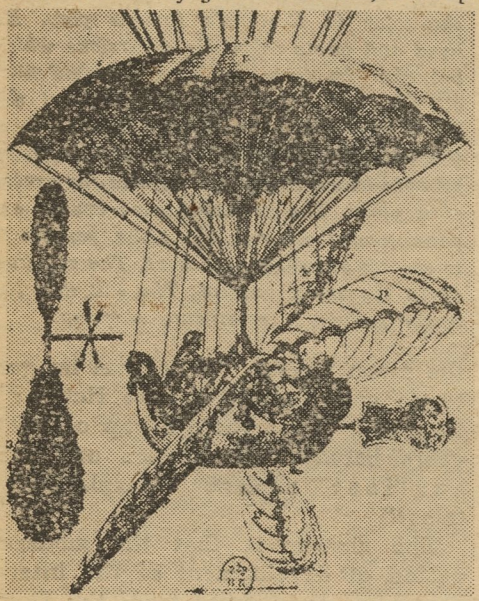
Lucian's ideas of the best methods of reaching the moon were a bit more realistic than Diogenes. In *The True History*, a whirl-wind seizes a ship and blows it to the moon. In his second tale, *Icaro-Menippus*, his character flies up with wings cut from an eagle and a vulture.

Readers of science fiction tend to chaff impatiently when Lucian is mentioned as an early exponent of the moon voyage. "What has he got to do with today's science fiction?" they ask. "Isn't there a gap of 1400 years between his stories and the earliest modern interplanetary tales?"

The answer is that the modern period of development of the interplanetary story dates from the first good translation of Lucian's works into English by Francis Hickes in 1634. Previous to that time, Ludovico Ariosto utilized a heavenly Saint to usher his character to the moon in *Orlando Furioso*, written in 1516. Even the well-known scientist Jo-

hannes Kepler proved scarcely less original when he employed a demon to accomplish the same purpose for him in *Somnium,* originally written in 1608, but not published until 1634. The truth is that *no* modern gap exists between Lucian and his followers at all. As far as today's world is concerned, Lucian might just as well have been published for the first time in 1634. The measure of his influence has been profound, particularly in the sense that he stressed the need for some mechanical agency as prerequisite of space travel.

Only four years later, in 1638, Francis Godwin had published *Man in the Moone,* a lunar voyage in which his lead character, Domingo Gonsales, constructs a mechanical harness and seat whereby a flock of birds may carry him to the moon. The same year there appeared a non-fiction work titled *A Discovery of a New World* by John Wilkins, Bishop of Chester, which evaluated problems of space travel, including distance, supplies, airlessness and temperatures. This book suggested three major methods of making such a voyage: 1.) Attaching wings to a man; 2.) Taming the giant birds known in legend as "Rocs", providing such birds actually existed; 3.) Construct a flying chariot of undetermined design.



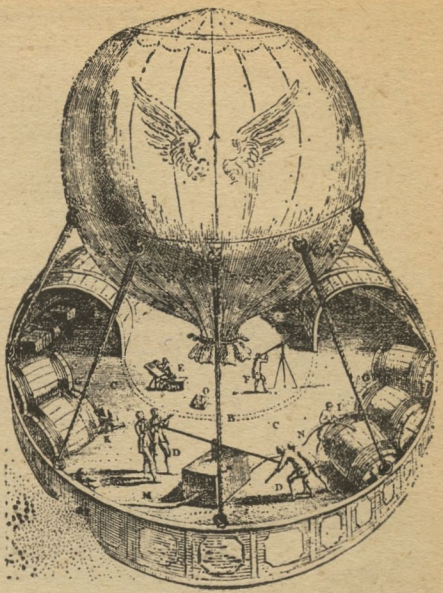
The engraving here, made in France, purports to be a ship capable of reaching the moon. The object on the left is apparently a screw-propeller device for manually driving the vessel forward. The featherlike objects on the ship do double duty as steering devices and "air oars."

In fiction, Cyrano de Bergerac was even more fertile with suggestions in *Voyage to the Moon,* first published in 1657. These ranged all the way from ridiculous and perhaps facetious suggestions of dew-filled bottles strung around the waist (since everyone knows dew rises when the sun strikes it) and rubbing one's self with bone marrow (since everyone knows that the Sun draws bone marrow aloft) to brilliant notions such as utilizing the rocket (the first man to make such a suggestion in recorded history), the ramjet principle and the internal combustion machine.

Despite Cyrano's good example, imitators were negligent about scientific flight methods for awhile, one well known author, Gabriel Daniel in *A Voyage to the World of Cartesius* published in 1690 exerting no more effort than *wishing* his soul to the moon.

Fortunately for the development of science fiction, France was then entering upon a period, encompassing several centuries, when she would be pre-eminent in scientific advancement and her citizens were fertile sources of new ideas. Though scarcely feasible, the idea of David Russen in *Iter Lunare:* or, *A Voyage* to the Moon issued in 1703, had an element of novelty. He suggested a catapault be constructed with proper pulleys and springs, which springs would stretch to the moon when released. This could be fastened upon arrival and when the passenger

A cross section of a giant enclosed space vessel, lifted by a balloon and evidently propelled by the expulsion of air or liquid enclosed in barrels, is shown in this print taken from a book, published in Paris, entitled Sur son project de voyager avec la Sphere Aerostatique de M. de Montgolfier.



This creation, was virtually a flying city, was a brainstorm of Robertson (le physicien) and was published in Vienna. It should be pointed out that, virtually until the mid-nineteenth century, the differences in problems of atmospheric and space flight were regarded as merely ones of degree: bigger balloons, greater precautions, etc.

wished to return, he merely unfasened it and let himself be drawn back to Earth by the spring.

The renowned author of *Robinson Crusoe*, Daniel Defoe displayed a mite more practicality when in 1705 he published *The Consolidator* which described a machine with giant wings, fifty feet wide, made from bird's feathers and manipulated by a power source similar to an internal combustion machine.

Samuel Brunt in 1727, decided that space travel was for the birds (to put it in the vernacular) and he had our fine feathered friends act as motive power. Striking a little note of originality was his thinking that the human passenger would be carried in a "palanquin," a container lined with feathers and pointed at both ends to cut down air resistance! In this manner was made *A Voyage to Cacklogallinia.*

Though he is initially swept to the moon by a whirl-wind *a la* Lucian, Murtagh McDermot in *Trip to the Moon* published in 1728, had a plan for returning to Earth involv- violent reaction. Placing himself inside a series of 10 hooped barrels, he is blown free of the moon's gravitation through the propelling force of 7,000 pounds of gunpower and floats safely down to Earth with the aid of wings he has thoughtfully constructed in advance.

Apparently McDermot supplied the pattern for an anonymous author who in *A New Journey to the World in the Moon*, written sometimes previous to 1741 and which was popular enough to go into several editions, merely wished himself to the moon but compensated by effecting real ingenuity in getting back. He had

the Lunarians help him construct an air-tight vessel with an internal combustion engine and wheels. He also showed some understanding of the problems of vacuum and gravity.

Ralph Morris disdained all this expensive gadgetry, however, and in 1751 penned *A Narrative of the Life and Astonishing Adventures of John Daniel,* wherein the moonship consisted of a winged wooden platform with a pump handle to pump the wings up and down.

A do-it-yourself movement in reaching the moon was advocated by the athletic hero of Reverend Miles Wilson's *The Man in the Moon* who

The term space ship *is commonly used today, but Rudolph Eric Raspe quite literally conveyed the famous Baron Munchausen to the moon in a full-rigged sailing vessel, borne on the back of a whirl wind. The method, copied from an early moon story by Lucian, was an improvement over a previous Baron Munchausen moon voyage astride a fast-growing bean stalk.*

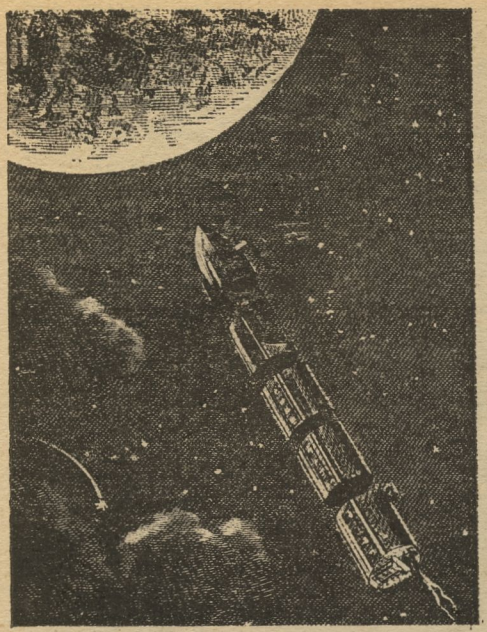
nonchalantly began climbing up to that satellite on a rope ladder in 1757. He's probably still on his way and if he's lucky might be able to hitch a ride on the first rocket to the moon.

The famed Baron Munchausen made two trips to the moon, records of which were carefully collected by his redoubtable biographer Rudolph Eric Raspe in *The Surprising Adventures of Baron Munchausen* issued in 1785. The first trip he journeyed there riding on a fast-growing bean stalk. The second time, having concluded his reading of Lucian, he let a whirl-wind carry his ship aloft and nestle it in a snug harbor on the moon.

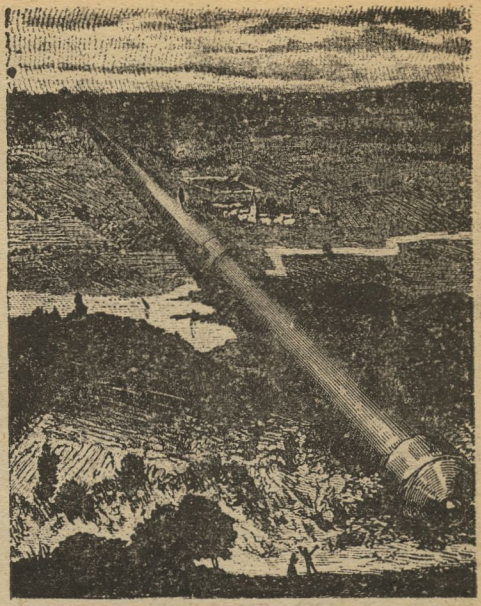
Though *A Voyage to the Moon* by Aratus published in 1793 is scarcely a distinguished literary effort, it was one of the earliest, if not the earliest interplanetary to use a balloon to travel through space. A similar conveyance, this time double-sized, was also approved by a gentleman writing under the psuedonym of Nicholas Lunatic, F. R. S. for a short story *A Voyage to the Moon,* included as part of a collection titled *Satiric Tales* published in London in 1808.

The earliest known American interplanetary story is George Fowler's *A Flight to the Moon;* or, *The Vision of Randalthus* published in Baltimore in 1813. The use of angels as a vehicular method at that late date is exasperating, except that Fowler partially redeems himself through the presentation of many scientific ideas provocative for his time.

Much more advanced were a series of 19 sketches done in 1815 by E. F. Burney, sister of Fanny Burney, popular British novelist of the period. These sketches include the earliest known illustrations of a space suit, very similar to those being contemplated today with helmet, eyeports and oxygen feed. The voyager is blasted to the moon on a platform



The space ship conceived by Jules Verne for his novel From the Earth to the Moon *as the vessel of tomorrow is unique among space ships since it is segmented into joined cars like a train. Here the space train is pictured approaching the moon. This concept was not used in the action of the novel, however, an ordinary shell-like vehicle being utilized.*



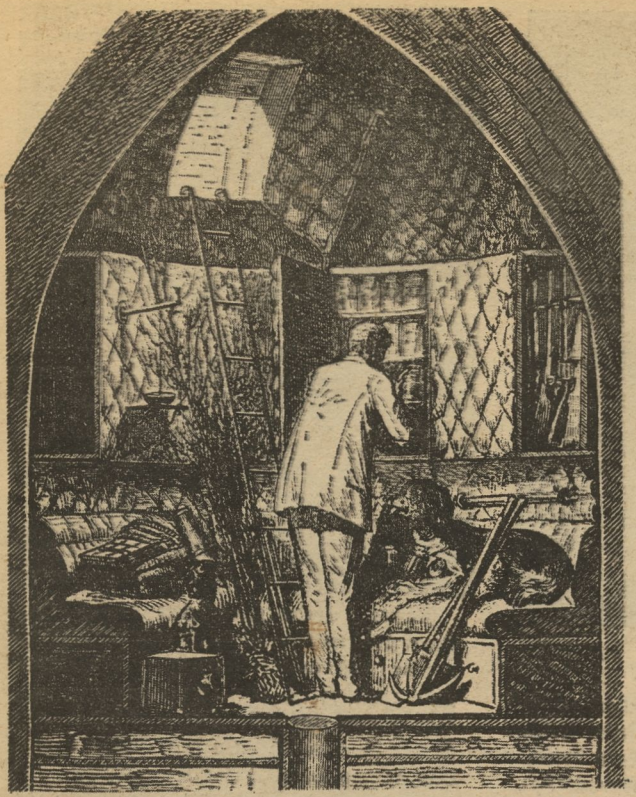
Verne's space train was to be shot from this tremendous cannon, stretching across counties, towns and rivers. The gun that fired the space shell which Verne actually used was imbeded deep in the earth with only the muzzle showing. Money to build it was raised by public subscription under the auspices of the Gun Club of Baltimore. The barrel was laid and the projectile fired near Tampa, Florida.

with an umbrella-like parachute for descent by the use of multiple cannon. Another method of shooting to the moon involves precipitating a volcanic explosion which force provides the necessary motive power.

Making a second American contribution to the interplanetary story in 1827, Prof. George Tucker, chairman of the faculty of the University of Virginia, writing under the name of Joseph Atterly projected *A Voyage to the Moon* which incorporates what may be the pioneer thinking on antigravity. A space ship is built, employing a metal which the author calls "Lunarium" since it is drawn to the moon.

Edgar Allan Poe is known to have read and been influenced by this novel whose author's school he attended as a youth. However, Poe decided to work on the theory that there was some air in space, perforce extremely tenuous and he conceived of inventing a gas 37.4 times lighter than hydrogen to convey a balloon to the moon. His story, *Hans Phaall —A Tale,* which appeared in 1835, is distinguished by the methodical scientific manner in which Poe deals with the problems encountered, including the emergency construction of an air-tight compartment in flight.

An early, perforce a very tenuous approach to matter transmission for space travel is made by Sidney Whiting in his novel *Helionde—Adventures in the Sun* published in 1855. The rays of the sun break a man's body down into basic atoms and draws it across space. A good try at plausi-



The interior of Verne's space vessel is depicted by an early artist. Note that there are compartments into which things are fastened. The interior is all heavily padded, both for insulation and to minimize the shock of abrupt movements. There is a gas jet on the left to provide illumination. The equipment carried includes guns, digging tools, a camera, blankets, rope, and several dogs.

bility is made in accounting for the sun's habitability.

One of the most carefully thought out interplanetary voyages of the 19th century was *A Voyage to the* Moon, written by an English clergyman, Crysostum Trueman in 1864. At least 60% of the novel is devoted to detailed discussions of the construction of the space ship (which utilizes an anti-gravity metal) and a day-by-day documentary of its flight to the moon, including notations on a growing lightness the further away the ship moves from the Earth. The use of iron screens which are manipulated to block the effects of the anti-gravity matter and control take-offs and landings of the ship almost incontrovertibly establishes this novel as the direct genesis of H. G. Well's screen-controlled anti-gravity device in his later *The First Men in the Moon.*

The cannon utilized by Jules Verne to propel his characters into space in a shell is now known highly impractical. However, Verne's scientific attempts at versimilitude, patterned after the manner of Edgar Allan Poe, made the concept believable at that time. We know, of course, that Verne did not necessarily think of the idea first, since, as has been recounted, Murtagh McDermot used a similar means in his previously reviewed novel of 1728. Despite the fact that Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon* published in 1865 and its sequel *Around the Moon* which followed five years later in 1870 make dull reading today, they nevertheless still continue to be reprinted and even presented on cinema.

The same year Verne's first moon novel was published saw the appearance in France of Achille Eyroud's *Voyage A' Venus,* a very rare book which has carved a niche for itself in the archives of space travel because of the fact that it is the second known work, after Cyrano de Berac, to use the reaction-engine principle in order to traverse stellar distances.

The French were at the forefront of nations conducting experiments with balloons in 1877, when Verne's

Darkness everywhere, save in one place far ahead, where the sun's rays seemed to penetrate in one gigantic beam which shone directly upon the mysterious air-ship, bringing out every detail with startling effect. Filled with awe, the boys gazed upon it.

Rarely has an author in a science fiction story attempted so much with so little knowledge as Richard R. Montgomery in his novel Two Boys' Trip to an Unknown Planet. *The strange craft in the foreground with the six balloons and the flapping wings is an* interstellar *ship from a planet revolving around the star Sirius. Commerce between the planets was commonplace. Originally this story appeared as a serial in Frank Tousey's* Boys of New York, *starting August* 17, 1889! *The author evaded spacial problems by surmising that if there were no air, one could get along without breathing.*

Paschall Groussett, close friend and collaborator of Jules Verne, wrote a number of science fiction stories under the pen name of Andre Laurie. The most famous story was The Conquest of the Moon, *translated from the French into English and reprinted in England and the United States. He built 25 giant magnets to drag the moon down to the Earth's surface. A number of the magnets are shown in action.*

Hector Servadac, or Off On A Comet made its appearance. In one of his least scientific excursions, Jules Verne has his characters, who have been mysteriously swept off the Earth by a side-swiping comet, return through the use of a balloon.

The all-but-unknown *Fifteen Months in the Moon* by G. H. Ryan, published by the author, probably about 1880, is distinctive on several counts. Teleportation based on "sound scientific principles" is employed for a trip to the moon (which makes this story's theme, ironically, right up to the minute as far as today's fashion in science fiction is concerned) and it also touches, probably for the first time anywheres, upon the necessity for gravity readjustment upon return to Earth of a man who has been on the moon for a prolonged period of time.

The same year produced the very famous *Across the Zodiac* by Percy Greg, a two-volume interplanetary adventure which was eventually translated into a number of other languages. Greg seems to have been overpoweringly influenced by Crysostum Trueman, for he adopts the device of anti-gravity, which he calls *Apergy* and loads the vessel up with plant life to absorb waste and refresh the air. His major contribution to the art seems to have been to pioneer towards moving away from the overused moon as a locale for space adventure in favor of Mars.

The year 1886 was noted by the appearance of *Aleriel; A Voyage to Other Worlds* by Rev. W. S. Lach-Szyma, who distinguishes himself in a book (which went into a number of editions) by introducing a winged alien from space, who disguises himself as a hunchback and travels as an observer amid the peoples of this planet. In a space vessel, that is given no more explanation than being termed "an ether ship", this creature visits Mars and Venus as well as Earth and obligingly draws a map of both which the author includes as a frontispiece.

The accelerating rate of scientific progress was reflected by a pick-up in the output of science fiction. Four interesting interplanetary adventures that appeared during the year 1889 were Hugh MacCall's *Mr. Stranger's Sealed Packet* concerning a trip to Mars on an anti-gravity ship; Andre Laurie's *The Conquest of the Moon*, in which he disdains space ships and instead, builds giant magnets which drag the moon down to the earth; Richard R. Montgomery's dime novel, *Two Boys' Trip to an Unknown*

(*Please turn to page* 79)

BELL, BOOK & CANDLE

by L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP and FLETCHER PRATT

THE YOUNG man in the expensive suit put his hat on the stool beside him and said; "Scotch!"

Doc Brenner paused with his Manhattan halfway to his mouth and said; "In my experience anyone who asks for Scotch in that tone of voice is either a non-drinker taking a big plunge, or a heavy drinker who can't be bothered with mixtures." He stopped and turned his head from left to right and back, sniffing.

"I smell it too," said Witherwax. "Oh, Mr. Cohan!" The bartender had given the young man his Scotch and came in answer to the appeal. "What's that smell all of a sudden? It's like a whale died in here, a long time ago."

The young man in the expensive suit put down his Scotch and shuddered violently, demonstrating the accuracy of Doc Brenner's observation.

"By God, I wish I knew," said Mr. Cohan. "It wasn't here a minute ago, and it seems to come from around him," he indicated the young man, "but that wouldn't be right now, that's Mr. Fries, and he's got more dollars than you have dimes and can afford soap if he wants to buy it."

"You ought to have Gavagan look after the plumbing," began Brenner, but was interrupted by the entry of an individual with a mop of unruly iron-grey hair and a pince-nez, who immediately took his place beside Mr. Fries. Like the others he sniffed, then laughed, revealing a set of teeth that would have done credit to a crocodile.

"Phil, you stink!" said he. "Mr. Cohan, give me a stinger. It will help kill the odor emanting from my unfortunate friend here. Didn't it work?"

"Are you kidding?" said Fries. "Another Scotch, Mr. Cohan. This is the latest counter-attack. The whole house is full of it and I can't even bear to smell myself, even if I

do work in a laboratory."

"I wonder what went wrong," said the man with the crocodile smile.

"I don't know, but something better go right pretty quick. Mrs. Harrison is going to leave if I don't get rid of it, and Alice is supposed to come down for the weekend and I don't even dare go up there and see her instead. George, if it doesn't stop I'll go nuts!" His voice rose in intensity and the knuckles of the hand that clutched the bar were white.

Witherwax said. "Pardon me, but you seem to be in a good deal of trouble. Is there any way we could help?"

"Yes," Brenner said. "Why not put your difficulties up to Mr. Cohan here? With all his experience behind the bar at Gavagan's, there aren't many things he doesn't have some answer for."

Fries made a push-away gesture and drank from his glass, but George flashed his row of teeth and said: "He's got a ghost, and it likes him."

"The ghost seems to have a rather queer way of displaying affection—" began Brenner, but Fries made another motion with his hand and said: "All right, all right, I'll tell about it. I think people you meet in Gavagan's can be trusted to keep a secret, and this is one. And maybe you can spot what's wrong, Mr. Cohan. George can't and he's supposed to be an expert. That's why I went to him in the first place. He's studied all that sort of thing for years, and even has a collection of medieval manuscripts. And it just gets worse. A week ago...

Look here, I better start at the beginning. I own that big brown house on Baltimore street, the one with the shutters. I don't know exactly how old it is; a couple of hundred years, I guess. It's always been in our family; was built by an ancestor of mine, about seven greats back, who was a good deal of an old rip, and was supposed to be in league with the devil. They believed in that sort of thing those days. Maybe he's the ghost himself, but he hasn't communicated, and I don't know that it matters. The main thing is that the ghost has been in the building for a long time, one of those ghosts that throws things around.

"Poltergeist," said George.

I know, Fries went on, but I wanted to explain. In spite of the odd happenings the ghost caused, it never made trouble for any member of the family—at least not in recent generations, though back in Victorian times when it was really fashionable to be frightened of ghosts, it may have been different. The fact is that our poltergeist established itself quite early in the game as taking a kind of benevolent interest in us. I can remember when I was a kid, we'd always have a Hallowe'en party at home, and Donald—we called him Donald for no good reason except that it was the name of the ancestor who built the house—would put on a special show for the occasion. If we were telling stories in front of the fire, there'd be a sound of footsteps from upstairs where there wasn't anybody, or else a can that someone had been going to take down cellar would tip over and go rolling down, bump, bump, bump, or a candle would go out in perfectly still air. It was very thrilling and satisfactory, and unlike most families, we grew up regarding ghosts as quite amiable and friendly creatures.

Donald paid for his keep by more than merely being amusing, too. There was an aunt of my mother's who came for a visit, bringing a perfect horror of a Chinese vase that didn't match anything in the decoration. I don't know what my mother intended to do with the thing, but as it turned out she didn't have to do anything. When the family came down for breakfast Donald had taken care of it and the vase was on the

floor, broken in about a thousand pieces. And there's a family story that when some burglars broke into the place a few years back, he raised such a terrible racket that everyone woke up and the burglars had to leave in a hurry. Give me another drink, I'm feeling better.

After my parents died and my sister got married and moved away, I had the house to myself except for Mrs. Harrison, the housekeeper. You might ask why I don't sell the old place, and I'll answer by saying that nobody wants to pay anything like what it's worth for a twenty-room house, even one with a poltergeist in it, and the girl I'm going to marry—that is, if I am—(Fries looked gloomily into his glass) wants to live in it. Anyway, with me alone there, Donald apparently got to feeling lonely. When I'd get home late from the laboratory, there would be a few companionable bangings around the place, and in the morning I'd find a book he had pulled out of the bookcase and thrown on the floor—just some friendly little action to let me know he was there taking care of me and appreciated having me there, too.

You have to understand that I met Alice at a college reunion up at Williamsburg. That's where she lives with her mother, and even if it isn't the nicest thing to say about one's future mother-in-law, that mother is a horrible old harridan. She can talk the paint off a wall and is always having everyone in for a tea-fight or a seance. Did I say she was a spiritualist? Well, she is; one of the kind that's always writing letters to newspapers and making a big fuss over the business. I don't know how Alice has stood her this long. But Alice and I hit it off right from the start, and it wasn't long before we decided it would be a good idea to get married.

Her mother raised a terrible row about it, not that she had anything definite against me, but just because she can't bear to see Alice getting away from her. Of course, Alice is old enough to write her own ticket, but after all, Mrs. Hilton—that's her name now, she's been married and divorced about six times—Mrs. Hilton is her mother, and she didn't want to hurt her. So we finally agreed that after we were married, she'd come and live with us in the big house. I figured that in a twenty-room place there'd be space enough to keep out of her way, and Alice felt the same. Just to give the thing a dry run, I asked them both down for New Year's weekend at the place. That's where the trouble started; that's why I smell like essence of decayed cabbage tonight.

He gave it a dramatic pause, and Brenner said, "What do you mean?"

What do I mean? I mean that Donald likes Alice all right, but didn't want any part of mama. There weren't any thumpings or things like that—he must know she's a spiritualist and would run him ragged if she got the chance—but it was unmistakable. The first night she was in the place there was a wind and one of the ouside shutters banged and she didn't get a wink of sleep all night. The next night the water-pipe in the bedroom over hers burst and she woke up swimming. Then when she went to bed, the edge of the rug was rolled up just inside the door and she tripped over it and nearly broke an ankle. Things like that; the kind of accidents that could happen anywhere. Only I knew they weren't accidents; they were Donald expressing his disapproval. He was letting me know that if that woman came to live there, there'd be hell to pay.

I suppose he was protecting me from Mrs. Hilton, you see, and I haven't a doubt he was right, and if we did have her living with us, there'd be hell to pay in more ways than one, but you can see the fix it put me in. If I told Mrs. Hilton what

was really going on, she'd be all over the place with mediums and assorted spiritualists before you could turn around, and I wouldn't dare call my name my own. If I didn't tell her, Donald would keep on giving her the works every time she came, and it would be just as bad. It's a shame you can't reason with a poltergeist.

So I went to George here, because I knew he'd been quite a student of that sort of thing, and he told me—

"I told him," said George. "that there wasn't anything to do but exorcise the ghost—put him right out of existence. He said he didn't want to do that to an old friend of the family, and I told him it was pretty much of a choice between the poltergeist and Alice the way things stood. So he agreed to try it."

Yes, I agreed, said Fries, and now I wish I hadn't. George dug out some old medieval manual and came around to exorcise the ghost. It was very impressive, with bell, book, and candle, just as they say. He hadn't got more than three-quarters of the way through the ceremony, though, when one of the glass crystals fell off the chandelier and hit him on the head.

A ghost is supposed to be powerless in the face of an exorcism, so we sat down to figure that one out, and when we did, one of the chair-legs gave way under George. Then we knew Donald had it in for George as badly as for Mrs. Hilton; probably on account of the exorcism, so we came over here to Gavagan's to figure it out. We decided that the poltergeist belonged to me and my house, and if anyone but a professional was going to exorcise it, it would have to be me.

You see, neither George nor I dared take a chance on letting the thing get out by calling in someone else, because if Mrs. Hilton got wind of it, she'd be down here like a ton of bricks, and the old battleaxe wouldn't want us to exorcise the ghost at all. I got George to show me how to do it and memorized what I had to say and then I tried it. It went off smooth as greased ice, with no crystals falling on my head, and there wasn't a sound in the place afterward, so I imagined the exorcism had succeeded and called up Alice long distance to ask her and her mother down for the weekend.

Luckily they couldn't make it and asked for a raincheck until next week. Because the exorcism hadn't worked at all. When I came down in the morning about half the books in the bookcase were pulled out and thrown around the floor and the pages of some of them were torn. George agreed with me that it was a warning, and said I must have done something wrong, but I went over the whole process with him watching, and I had it perfect.

We puzzled over it for a long time. Then he said: "What kind of bell did you use?"

I told him the little bell that stands on the dinner table when I want to call Mrs. Harrison from the kitchen.

"Wrong," said he. "I've seen that bell, and it's brass. If you really want to exorcise a ghost, you'll have to get a silver bell."

Well, I got a silver bell—they're harder to find than you might think—and that night I tried the exorcism again. It worked no better than the first time. That is, there weren't any noises, but during the night a big piece of plaster dropped out of the ceiling in my bedroom and hit the pillow beside my head. George and I knew it was another warning, more in sorrow than in anger; Donald could just as easily have dropped that plaster on my head, only he didn't want to hurt me, just to discourage me from trying any more exorcisms.

So George and I checked over the whole procedure again. It couldn't be the bell was wrong, and George

said it was absurd to believe that Donald was immune to exorcism. We had a long argument about it. Finally, he said, "What book did you use?"

"A Bible, of course, just as you told me," I said.

"Yes, but what Bible?" said he.

"The family Bible," I told him. "It's almost as old as the house, and I don't think there's any doubt about it."

He said: "But it's a King James Bible, isn't it? A Protestant Bible?"

"Of course," I said.

"That's probably the trouble, then," said George. "Most Protestant churches don't have any such thing as exorcism. Maybe some of them do, but to be on the safe side you need a Douai Bible. A Catholic Bible."

Well, I got one, and I tried all over again. That was last night, and now look at me—or rather, smell of me. I've turned into something no respectable goat would associate with, and the whole house smells the same way, and Alice and her mother are coming down, and Mrs. Harrison threatening to quit, and what I'm going to do, I don't know, and I want another Scotch...

Brenner said: "Why not give up the idea of exorcising Donald? From what you say he seems to be an intelligent sort of poltergeist, and I'm sure he'd understand."

"Mrs. Hilton!" said Fries in a strangled tone of voice, and drank again.

"I've looked it up in the best texts," said George, with a frown. "I can't imagine what the trouble is." He addressed Mr. Cohan. "Can you?"

"That I can," said the bartender readily, crossing his arms and leaning back. "One thing you'll be wanting and not having is a blessed candle, and that you can get at any parish house for the asking. But I'm thinking that even if you had it, it's little good the candle would be doing you. A black Protestant, and not in holy orders, go on with you! All you'll be doing is making magic, and your pollyghost will love the smell of it."

"But look here," said Fries. "I can't very well turn Catholic overnight to get rid of it. And Alice and her mother are coming."

"That, young felly, is your problem," said Mr. Cohan. "Would you care to be paying for your drinks now? That smell is bad for the trade."


Virgil
Finlay

the planet of heavenly joy

by JOHN RULAND

OUTSIDE of the hurtling spaceship, the black immenseness of space stretched away to eternity. Inside, there was light and soft laughter, in the lounge the cheering tinkle of cocktail glasses. The room was filled with people enjoying themselves—all of them except Daev Graviton. Daev sat stiffly, holding tight to his bottle of mineral water. He had bought it because he had been thirsty, not because he wanted to be social. Therefore he felt immensely superior to all the fooderds and drinkerds around him.

Daev sat across from the fat man from Mizar II who was reaching for his fifth martini. The meaty hand closed around the stem of the glass and lifted, the drink rolled down the well lubricated throat in a single gulp. Daev shuddered as he thought of the destruction done by the raw ethyl alcohol on the membranes of the man's esophagus. The fat man sighed with contentment and belched. He lifted one eyebrow at Daev's unhappy expression.

"The trouble with you my boy," the fat man said, "Is that you have no real appreciation of the finer things in life. Good drink, good food. And...or are you against women too?"

Daev knew no better answer than that given in section 24 of the *Technician's Handbook*. Those words had always steadied him when unwanted emotions caused trouble.

"Satisfaction of the mind is the only real pleasure. A person who eats for the vulgar pleasure of eating is a fooderd. A person who drinks for the pleasure of intoxication is a drinkerd. These false pleasures interfere with the true pleasure of the mind. Both foodery and drinkery are punishable crimes."

"On your planet, my boy!" laughed the fat man, "And only on your planet. The rest of the planets, I am happy to say, are civilized. But you

didn't tell me—what about women?"

Daev smiled, "What about women? They are the same as men—except for a minor physical difference.."

"Minor!" mumbled the fat man in an awed voice.

"...a minor physical difference that is not important. On my planet of Automation-17, one of the most advanced worlds in the League of Automated Planets, our marriage partners are selected by the Gene Machine for the best possible mental match. In fact I myself am going to be married upon my return from this business trip. I look forward to meeting the girl. I'm sure she has a fine mind."

"I'm sure she has," the fat man whispered, more than a little shaken by this marriage custom. He quickly signalled for a double martini. "I'm afraid the marriage customs on my planet are slightly different."

The fat man's conversation had stirred up things that Daev hadn't thought about in years. And didn't want to think about. Quickly draining his glass of mineral water he stood up to leave the other man's unsettling presence. Just at that moment the ship's speaker clicked and the robot purser's voice filled the room.

"Passengers for Sylvain please go to the exit lock. All passengers for Sylvain. 60 seconds to disembarking time."

"That's me," the fat man said, gulping his drink and heaving towards the door. Both he and Daev reached the corridor at the same time. They came to the round plate in the floor that marked the exit lock and the fat man put his ticket in the slot; the machine made an electronic hiccup and lighted a panel that said PREPARE TO DISEMBARK. At the same time a plate slid back and the fat man's luggage rolled out and slid to a stop at his feet. He turned to Daev and held out his hand.

"It's been nice talking to you, have a good trip."

Daev shook the man's hand and said good-by.

At that very instant, deep in the mechanical brain of the spaceship, a gassy tube short circuited. It wasn't a very important tube and the robot brain immediately replaced it with a good one. But at the instant it failed, the tube made a mistake. It said *two* instead of *one*. Two passengers to disembark, not one.

For Daev the results were drastic. The floor dropped away, a valve opened, and he and the fat man were whisked down a tube into the shuttleship. *DISEMBARKED* the lighted panel flashed and the valve snapped shut.

"Volts and vacuums!" Daev shouted, "What happened?"

"I imagine you've been disembarked for Sylvain," said the fat man who was much more relaxed under the mellow effects of six martinis. "Isn't that where you were going?"

"Never!" cried Daev, "I would never go to any planet but an Automated Planet. I must go back to the spaceship."

"That would be difficult," the fat man said. "Considering the ship's schedule it should be about two light years away by now."

The robot shuttleship grounded then. The port slid open and warm sunlight streamed in. The fat man picked up his bag, nodded good-by and left.

Daev stood there, looking out at the concrete landing platform with the green fields stretching away behind it and felt paralyzed. A moment before he had been in the stainless steel comfort of the spaceship, now he was faced with a barbarian world that didn't have weather control and allowed *plants* to grow on the bare earth. It was disgusting. He had to get out, get off this planet, get another ship.

As he stumbled down the ramp someone said in a soft, musical voice,

"May I have your ticket please."

Daev turned to the girl in the blue uniform—and collapsed against the side of the ship, ashen-faced and sweating. She was a spaceport official; trim boots, severe uniform, cap and clipboard. Only the top of her uniform was cut so low as to be practically nonexistant. The tiny scrap of fabric was strained to its utmost capacity.

"Ticket please," the girl said again, then she noticed where his attention was fixed. She smiled at him and arched her back delicately.

"I have no ticket," he croaked. "I have been illegally marooned by an ill designed piece of machinery on this barbarian planet. I demand transportation away from here on the very next ship."

As he talked he forced his mind to consider familiar, healthy things. His laboratory, his iconoscope, his computer. Only the tubes in the computer kept changing shape, rounding, changing color...

"The very next ship," broke in the warm female voice, "That will be in exactly six weeks."

"Six weeks!" His voice raised in a bellow of pain.

"Having trouble my boy?" Someone said close to his ear. "Perhaps I can help?"

The fat man from the ship. With a heartfelt sob of recognition Daev dragged the other around the bulk of the shuttleship, out of sight of the woman.

"Call the police," Daev said grimly, "If they have police on this planet. That woman, she should..her clothes.."

It didn't bear putting into words. The fat man nodded in silent sympathy and proving equal to the situation, produced a silvery flask from his pocket.

"Take a drink of this," he said, "It's a great nerve-settler."

Daev hesitated, then swallowed a large mouthful. While he was choking the fat man led him to a shady spot under the rocket's stern and they both sat down. While Daev was blinking the tears from his eyes the other helped himself to a drink, then explained.

"The first thing you have to realize is that the universe is a big place—and that a lot of different people live in it. Some planets, like the ones in your automated League, are highly industrialized. Others, like Sylvain here, have an agricultural basis to their economies. Different planets breed different people."

"You mean, that girl..," Daev groped for the words, "She wasn't doing anything, or wasn't.."

"Wasn't breaking any laws? By no means. I suppose you are referring to her, ah, costume?"

Daev nodded in wide-eyed agreement.

"Local custom, just local custom, my boy. After all this is a warm planet and too many clothes do tend to be uncomfortable. That fact together with a rather unusual local situation.."

"*What* unusual local situation?" Daev asked, eyes narrowing.

The fat man smiled and took a drink, then smiled again.

"A local situation that is unusual in the entire galaxy. Large deposits of radioactive ores or some such thing, the reasons aren't too well known. But the results are. Whatever it is has cut down the ratio of male to female births. It seems there is only one male baby born for every thousand or so female babies."

"That means..," Daev said, eyes staring.

"Precisely. About a thousand women for every man. So you see when the Minoan Modern styles were introduced a few years back it really caught on. And practical too, with much of the dress missing in the front I imagine it's quite cool..."

"Practical!" Daev said, eyes glazed. "Thank you. I've heard

enough. I find it hard to believe that an entire planet could wallow in immorality, but you have convinced me. If you know of a good hotel I would appreciate your telling me. A quiet secluded one where I can wait until my ship arrives."

"No trouble at all, my boy." The fat man snapped his fingers at a passing robocopter. "I'll take you to my hotel, one of the finest on the planet."

While they buzzed towards the nearby city, Daev steeled himself to ask the other man just one more question.

"You seem quite..familiar with this planet, do you mind if I ask what business brings you to Sylvain?"

"No business at all—just pleasure. I've been saving for ten years to come here."

After that Daev sat quietly in his corner of the cab until they reached the hotel.

For one entire week he managed to stay in his room, fighting against boredom. The library had very few technical works, all of them horribly out of date, so he had nothing to read. He had to eat the thick, heavy natural foods for two days before he managed to locate a store that carried concentrated rations for spaceships. With a six weeks supply of these, plus five carboys of distilled water, he felt almost civilized and at home—as long as he stayed locked in his room.

On the eighth day of his stay he was on the visiphone most of the morning and managed to locate a new book in the library. He ordered it sent to his room, but it never arrived because of a malfunction in the hotel's delivery tubes. After six bored hours of doing mental equations he could stand it no longer, the tubes showed no signs of being repaired. Stalking out of his room he took the express elevator to the service basement and slammed into the machinery section.

Of course the mechanic was a woman. She had the delivery sorter spread out on the floor in a number of greasy pieces and was looking at them in a bored fashion. Daev noticed at once that she was decently clad in plastic coveralls that weren't *too* transparent.

"What's wrong with it?" he asked.

She turned slowly and tossed a wave of gold hair out of her eyes. "Why hello, handsome," she said, "What rainbow did you fall out of?"

Daev flushed red and ignored the remark. "Where's the thermocobukator," he asked, "they're usually a source of trouble on these old machines?"

"Hmmm?.. Oh probably over there in the corner. My name is Edel, what's yours?"

He ignored this sally and rooted in the dismembered parts until he found what he was looking for. And it *was* broken. He made a quick repair with a piece of wire. When he straightened up Edel was standing close behind him, her breath warm on his neck.

"Alright, don't tell me your name. I'll just call you Handsome." Before he could turn around she bit him lightly on the ear with sharp little teeth. "Sorry, but I just couldn't resist."

Daev backed away from her, stumbling over the pieces of machinery. "It's fixed," he said hoarsely, then swallowed until his voice returned. "The blekizer looks worn though.."

"That's nice, but let's forget about that old machinery and talk about you and me. What are you doing tonight?"

Daev slammed the door behind him and fled to his room.

For some reason his temperature had gone up and he only felt better after a long stay under a cold shower. After dinner he pulled a chair over to the reading light and sat down with a good book of logarithms

and a big glass of water.

There was a knock on the door.

Sitting quietly, he made believe he didn't hear it. The knocking was more insistent the second time so he reluctantly went to answer. He meant to open the door only a bit, but the automatic mechanism swept it wide. Daev could only stand paralyzed as a graceful blonde in a bronze-metallic sheath dress brushed by him. Though the dress had long sleeves, there was a marked shortage of fabric in the front. Before Daev's fading senses could return the girl moved across the room and sat down on the corner of his bed.

"Close the door, handsome," she said. "You're beginning to look like part of the furniture."

Her words closed a relay of memory in his mind and her face swam into focus. It was the girl-mechanic from the basement.

"What are you doing here—how did you find me?"

She answered with a smile, "Why that wasn't hard. You're the mystery man of Sylvain. Everyone knows you're here, but no one has seen you. Didn't you know the hotel had hired an extra squad of guards to assure your privacy?"

"Guards..?" he mumbled, "Then how did you get here?"

She fluffed her hair with one hand before she answered, a motion that did such things to other parts of her anatomy that he was forced to close his eyes for a moment.

"Well, as a hotel employee you know, I can come and go pretty much as I please. And after your being so kind to me this afternoon I felt that one good turn surely deserved another. I'm here to take you out and show you the town. After all, you wouldn't want to leave without seeing *everything* would you?"

Her choice of terms was so inappropriate that he had to gulp an entire glass of water before he could tell her no.

"I don't blame you," she said, "we can be so much more comfy and private here."

Daev was beginning to understand the ways of this planet and he was on to her meaning in an instant. Particularly when she relaxed back. He flung the door open and said in a too loud voice that he would prefer to go out.

After the first hour Daev almost became used to his companion and the other women that filled the streets. He couldn't really accept the clothing styles, but managed finally to make his mind and his eyes slip across the bare flesh. To linger was to be lost. They cruised around the city in a robocopter while Edel showed him all the points of interest. It was a backward, unscientific place and Daev wasn't greatly interested.

Then they went to a smoke-filled underground bar that Edel said was the best night club in the city. They watched the entertainment from the security of a padded booth and he marveled at the depths to which humans can sink. From the shouts of pleasure the rest of the audience didn't share his lack of enthusiasm.

The star attractions were a dancing team, both women although the taller was dressed as a man. They flew in tight circles, weaving in and out as the wild music accelerated in tempo. Towards the end Daev couldn't watch. He downed the drink the waitress had put before him and when the lights went up he was the only person in the room who wasn't applauding loudly.

In spite of the place being large and crowded, there were only two other men in the night club besides himself. One was a thin hollow chested old man with a wan smile on his face. There were five young and vivacious girls at his table, all laughing at his jokes and taking turns feeding him dainties. The other man, Daev realized with a start, was the fat man from the ship.

Only he wasn't that fat any more. His clothes hung rather loosely and there were purple bags under his eyes. He showed no evidence of being sick, in fact he was laughing and joking with the ten girls that crowded his table. When he saw Daev watching him he raised his glass in a toast.

Just at that moment Daev's vision was cut off by a lightly clad redhead of heroic proportions who loomed over him, smiling in a beguiling way.

"Honey," she breathed from between scarlet lips, "you are the best looking man I have ever seen. Why don't you and I..."

The suggestion was never completed. Edel rose silent and smooth as a springing tiger and landed her hard little fist on the point of the big redheads nose. She squawked and crashed backwards into another table whose occupants leaped up, screaming a ragged chorus. The redhead rose slowly from the floor, a crimson trail of blood running down her face, and swung a bottle at Edel.

The bottle never landed. A chunky woman with short hair appeared suddenly and grabbed her arm. With a professional twist she tightened the arm behind the redheads back and marched her towards the exit.

Just as the waitresses straightened the broken table the bouncer returned. She headed straight for Daev and her granite face cracked into a grin.

"Any more of these tramps give you trouble good-looking, you just call for old Bele. There isn't a dame on this planet that can stand up to me for ten seconds."

She threw a frosty look at Edel and steamed away. Daev signalled frantically for the check.

In the weeks that followed Daev went out with Edel other times. They visited the waterworks, the dynamo station and the science museum. It was there, in the Electronic Hall, that she asked the question.

"Daev—do you like me—a little bit?"

His ears filled with the roar of the giant spark-generator, it took Daev a moment to understand her question. Then he smiled at her.

"Of course I like you Edel, I think you're a very good technician in spite of your lack of training."

"Not that," she said, scowling, "I mean do you find me *attractive?*"

She had leaned forward as she said it, her large blue eyes close to his and a subtle fragrance rising from her long hair. Somehow he found it very disturbing.

"Of..of course. You're far prettier than most girls, and very kind. But you have to realize that there are more important things than that. For instance, I have no idea of what your gene chart is like. And then the pH factor.."

Edel had leaned even closer while he talked, until her hair brushed softly against his cheek. Her eyes were half closed and her lips were moist and half open. When she talked her voice was low and he could barely make out the words.

"Aren't there somethings that are ..more important..than genes..or pH factors..."

Then her lips were on his and their contact was the source of a neural current that froze him there—yet at the same time lifted him up and suspended him in space. After a timeless moment a spark of conscience returned and flamed up. It took all the weakened strength of his arms to push her slight figure away from him.

He couldn't put it into words. Instead of talking he fled from those lips that were like a soft trap to capture a man forever.

After that he didn't leave his room or answer any calls. He had only one visitor in those weeks, the fat man from the ship. At first he had ig-

nored the knocking on the door, but opened it when he heard the deep masculine voice. The fat man had shuffled in and dropped into the deepest chair.

Only he wasn't the fat man any more, he was a stooped, slightly palsied and hollow-eyed thin man. Yet a smile of happiness was never far from his face.

"You've been sick?" Daev asked, "Is there anything I can do?"

"Nothing, nothing my boy," he said hollowly, waving a limp hand. "Not sick at all. In fact I've never felt better. Just dropped by to say good-by. You're leaving next week aren't you?"

"That's when the ship leaves, and I have every intention of being on it."

For some reason the words gave him a strange pang, not the happiness he should expect from the thought of going home.

The thin man stayed and chatted for awhile, then glanced at his watch.

"Time I was leaving," he said, hauling himself to his feet. "Don't want to be late for my date."

They shook hands then for the last time and the thin man scuffled slowly out. Daev didn't want to think about him, so he ordered lunch though it was still early. He remembered to tell Room Service that the steak the day before had been overdone, he liked them medium rare. The meal clicked out of the delivery chute a few minutes later and he had to admit that this steak was a lot better. While he ate he noticed the pile of lifeboat rations gathering dust in the corner and he fought down a twinge of conscience.

"If those rations were any good I wouldn't have to eat this native food," he told himself. "They're short of too many vital elements. Until I get back to some decent synthetics I'll have to make the best of the situation. It has nothing to do with foodery."

"Or drinkery," he said downing the last of the cold bottle of beer.

Then the six weeks were up and the last day arrived. The shuttleship was due to blast off at 1650. He decided to leave the hotel at 1400 so there wouldn't be the slightest possibility of missing the ship. When he opened the door Edel was standing there.

"I came to wish you a good trip," she said. "And to say that I'm sorry if I made you angry."

"Oh that's all right, I wasn't angry at all."

He tried to ignore the two tiny tears that were forming in each corner of her eyes. He stuck out his hand to shake hers. She took it and once more that sparkling magnetism reached from her skin. It drew them together and pulled his arms around her, their lips melted tightly together. Standing this way he was aware of the entire length of her body pressed against his.

It was the hardest thing he had ever done in his life, pushing her away from him. She was limp and didn't try to stop him, it was the weakness in his own arms that betrayed him. His voice was strange, even to his own ears.

"It's no good Edel. I like you, perhaps too much, but my mind isn't clear when I am near you. And man's mind is the only thing that separates him from the animals. I have to go back to my own planet. I have my life there and my work, it's better that way for both of us. You'll see, it'll be much better that way."

He almost ran down the hall to the elevator and the sight of her tear-stained face stayed with him all the time. Only by a great effort of will could he replace her siren vision with the healthy figures of a differential equation. Then her face kept peering through the numbers, like prison bars.

Just as if things weren't bad

enough, he was delayed on his way to the spaceport by a funeral. The mourners came first, a long line of crying women draped in black. For some reason they looked familiar—when the hearse went by he knew why. He had seen them with the thin man who now lay dead in the plastic coffin. For some reason there was a smile on the dead man's features, and Daev was afraid he knew why. He didn't try to find out the cause of death, just hurried on to the waiting shuttleship.

The return trip to Automation-17 was a period of formless monotony. Even the up-to-date technical works in the ship's library couldn't hold his interest for long. One dull day replaced another and it was with a feeling of relief that he faced his last few hours in space. Standing on the disembarking plate he looked forward eagerly to his homecoming. Once he was among the long-familiar machinery and friends he would be able to lose the sense-clogging memories of Sylvain.

There was no one waiting for him when he stepped through the shuttleship's port. He pushed away the little pang of disappointment, then glanced at the clock set into the bulkhead. It was the middle of secondshift—he could not expect anyone to leave work just to welcome him back. They might do that on a backward planet like Sylvain, but not on an Automated Planet. He was home now, back where he belonged. Squaring his shoulders he marched down the steel corridor towards livingsection.

All the time he walked little ideas kept nibbling at the edge of his mind and he kept pushing them away. Experiment had proven that a dull brown was the most relaxing color for the eyes—but did everything have to be painted a dull brown? It was a heretic thought and he rejected it. No sooner was it gone than he became aware of the hardness of the floor. A carpet would be softer to walk on...maybe a green carpet. Green the color of grass in the sunlight.

He stopped short and realized for the first time how much his stay on Sylvain had corrupted and changed him. What weak stuff he must be made of that he could be influenced so easily. How unhappy his parents would be if they knew their careful training had been ineffectual.

Weak emotionalism—he would not give in to it. He was an automated man, made of sterner stuff. Slapping his sliderule where it hung in its case at his side, he swore an oath that he would put the weakness of Sylvain behind him and once again be the automated man he used to be.

Walking firmly down the corridor, his footsteps gave back martial echoes.

When his parents came off shift he was standing stiff in the middle of their apartment. They nodded hello when they came in and his mother pressed the button that delivered the dinner packages. They ate in silence, the distilled water washing down the dry kernels of the synthetics. When they were through his father sat at his desk and opened the Daily Technical Report. He remembered something as he started to read and looked up at Daev.

"You're late," his father said, "We expected you six weeks ago."

"A malfunction on the spaceship, father. If it had been an Automated ship it wouldn't have happened."

"Of course not," father said, "We wouldn't allow such a thing. Were you stranded in space for that time?"

"No, the malfunction landed me on an undeveloped planet, I had to wait for the next ship."

"One of the undeveloped planets of the Automated League?" father asked.

"No, this was an agricultural planet, they had never heard of the

League. No weather control, natural crops, the machinery kept breaking down and..."

"That's enough, Daev," father said while mother looked slightly sick. "Remember, we've just eaten."

Chastised, Daev sat at his desk and read his copy of the Report until the door buzzer cut through the concentrated silence. Father put his paper carefully in the file and stood up.

"That will be your future wife, Daev. While you were away the Gene Machine made a selection for you. The routing slip said she would call tonight."

Daev stood up, trying to control the feeling of pleasure and expectancy. These were very un-automated emotions and he pointedly ignored them. Then the door snikked open and she came in.

"My name is Ecka," she said.

She was every automated man's dream of a spouse. I.Q. 168 the routing card said. Her thin figure in the utilitarian brown worksuit was unmarred by unsightly bulges either in front or behind. Thick glasses proved that she believed in plenty of study and her practical crewcut showed she didn't believe in unnecessary frivolities. The fact that she was slightly asthmatic and breathed through her half-opened mouth was of no importance to an automated man.

What an awful mess Daev thought, then almost grunted out loud as he levered the unwanted thought out of his mind. Those were unfit thoughts and he denied their very existence. Stepping forward he introduced himself and formally shook her hand.

Afterwards, when he tried to find reasons for what happened he was sure it was the handshake that did it. Her hand was cold, dried by chemical washes and ingrained slightly with machine oil. But it was still a woman's hand. When he held it, felt the pressure of female flesh, the light pulse of blood in tiny arteries—something happened. Six weeks of life on Sylvain crashed head on against a lifetime of existence on Automation-17. And something inside of him bent and broke with a delicate crystalline tinkle.

Ecka was his promised one, soon to be his wife. Therefore he stepped forward, put his arms around her and kissed her.

It was a dry, rather cardboardy kiss, that was the only thing he remembered clearly. After that the room became a bedlam of sound. Ecka pushed away from him, screaming continuously. His mother's head gave a dull bonk as it hit the floor. His father banged the alarm button and the red lights flashed on and off while the sirens climbed up to an unbearable pitch. The peace officers came through the door firing their gas guns and that was the last he remembered.

The detention cell was quiet and he saw no one. His meals were delivered automatically and he spent the days lying on the cot in a limbo of regret. Strangely, he had no remorse for what he had done. Rather he regretted an opportunity missed, a chance of happiness he had not even seen at the time.

When the door finally opened and his father came in he read the decision on his face, in the harsh lines around the old technician's eyes.

"The Molecular Chamber, father?" Daev asked.

"The Molecular Chamber. That's what the First Engineer said when he read the report. He said that our planet would never be safe until every atom of your body was floating through space as fine dust.

"That was his first decision, before he read the medical report. The doctors said that your actions were

(*Please turn to page* 105)

TOO ROBOT TO MARRY

by GEORGE H. SMITH

FATHER CHARLES looked up in surprise as the two robots came up the walk to the parish house and rang the doorbell.

Robots were common enough these days even in little Bridgeton but he still hadn't recovered from the shock of seeing them approach the rectory when they were shown into his study by the housekeeper.

"Father, these," the woman indicated them with one hand, "are L53 and LW 456. They want to speak to you."

"Ah, yes. Come in my... Come in and sit down," Father Charles had never been quite this close to one of the eight foot giants who did much of mankind's menial work. They were rather awe inspiring. "Do you sit down?"

The larger of the two, the one who had the white letters L 53 on its chest, spoke in a queer rasping voice. "Thank you, Father, but we are not equipped for sitting. That is one reason why you don't see us at mass on Sundays."

"Mass? You? I mean...are you Catholic?"

"Our former owner, Father, was Reverend Piere Henri, S. J. We were raised in the faith."

Father Charles was shocked. "Do you mean that Father Henri allowed you to partake of the sacraments? But...you're..."

"While we were with Father Henri, we made our first communion and were confirmed. We have tried to live in the faith since his death."

"You have?" Father Charles ran his hand through his hair. "Well... what do you want here now?"

"Lia and I would like for you to marry us, Father."

"Marry you? Marry you? Do you know what you're saying?" the priest exploded. "You're machines! You have no souls!"

"We wish to be married. We love each other."

"You are asking me to commit sacrilege. You were created by man and man cannot create souls."

"Father Henri thought that in our case the soul may have come with the dawning of sentience," L 53 said.

"Father Henri had some pretty heretical ideas for a Jesuit," Father Charles said angrily. "Go on back to your owners and forget this ridiculous idea."

"But Father, let me explain. We feel that we really must get married." There was pleading in the mechanical voice and an almost woman-like sadness in the eyes of the other robot.

"I'm sorry but I won't discuss it any further," Father Charles said in a somewhat kinder tone. "It is contrary to the doctrines of the church."

"Father Henri..."

"Father Henri was a sentimental fool," Father Charles roared, losing patience again. "Now get out of here before..."

"You don't understand, Father. We have to..."

"Get out!"

It was almost three weeks later that Father Charles stood on the steps of the church after hearing confession and saw the two robots coming toward him. LW 456 was carrying a rather bulky bundle.

"We have come to confession. Father," L 53 announced.

"Confession? You're mad!" Father Charles said.

"But we have sinned, Father...we have sinned." L 53's voice came as close to breaking as a robot's can.

"Sinned? What do you mean? How could you sin?"

"This is why we felt we had to marry, Father," LW 456 said uncovering the bundle she carried to display a small utility robot.

"Our new work is in the robot factory just outside of town and they set us to building this little one for work in the home. We were set by our owners to reproducing our species."

"We have conceived outside of marriage, Father, and so we have sinned," LW 456 said.

"Help us, Father," L 53 pleaded.

"Help *me*, Father," Father Charles said lifting his eyes upward.

THE PLANET OF HEAVENLY JOY

(*continued from page* 103)

pure madness, that you must be suffering from an incurable malady undoubtedly picked up on that barbarian planet. They recommended that you be given a choice."

"A choice, Father?"

"The choice of either the Molecular Chamber or eternal exile from the Automated Planets. I told them of course that there were some things worse than death, that you would choose the Chamber."

Daev drew a deep breath and let it out slowly so his voice would stay calm. The truth would hurt his father too much.

"You're wrong father, after what I have done I want to make amends. To live the rest of my unhappy life among the barbarian planets."

"Not the barbarian planets, son. At least pick a semicivilized planet like earth, that has heard of machinery."

"Then there would be no penance, father. I am going to the planet where I contracted this dread infection, to Sylvain."

"A martyr," father said as Daev walked slowly out.

It was all the martyr could do to stop himself from running towards his doom.


Virgil
Finlay

COUNTERPART

by ROBERT SILVERBERG

MARK JENNER delivered the play's final line with as much force as he could muster, and the curtain dropped like a shroud, cutting off stage from audience. Jenner gasped for breath and fashioned a warm smile for his face to wear. The other six members of the cast left the wings and arranged themselves around him, and the curtain rose again for the calls. A trickle of applause crossed the footlights.

This is it, Jenner thought. *We're through.*

He bowed graciously, peering beyond the glare of the foots to count the house. The theater was about three-quarters full—but half the people out there were free-riders, pulled in by the management just to give the house a semblance of fullness. And how many of the others were discount-ticket purchasers? Probably, Jenner thought as the curtain dropped again, there were no more than fifty legitimate customers in the house. And so another play went down the drain. A savage voice within him barked mockingly, telling him that it was *his* fault, that he no longer had what it took to hold an audience, that he lacked the subtle magnetism needed to pull people out of their homes and into the theater.

There would be no more curtain-calls. Tiredly, Jenner walked off into the wings and saw Dan Hall, the producer, s t a n d i n g there. Abruptly the tinsel glamor of curtain-calls faded. There could be only one reason why Hall was here now, and the dour, sallow cast of the producer's pudgy face left no doubt in Jenner's mind. Closing notices would be posted tonight. Tomorrow, Mark Jenner would be back to living off capital again, and waiting out his days.

"Mark..."

Jenner stopped. Hall had reached out to touch his arm. "Evening, Dan. How goes it?"

"Bad."

"The receipts?"

Hall chuckled dryly. "What receipts? We had a houseful of unemployed actors sitting out there on passes; and the advance sale for tomorrow night is about eleven bucks' worth."

"There isn't going to be any tomorrow night, is there, Dan?" Jenner asked leadenly.

Hall did not answer. Marie Haas, the ingenue, radiant in the sparkling gown that looked so immodest on so young a girl, glided toward them. She wrapped one arm around the rotund producer, one around Jenner. On stage, the hands were busy pulling the set apart.

"Big house tonight, wasn't it?" she twittered.

"I was just telling Mark," Hall said. "Most of those people were unemployed actors here on passes."

"And," Jenner added, "there are seven more unemployed actors here on this stage right now."

"No!" Marie cried.

Jenner tried to smile. It was rough on a girl of nineteen to lose her first big play after a ten-day run; but, he thought, it was rougher on a forty-year-old ex-star. It wasn't so long ago, he told himself, that the name Mark Jenner on a marquee meant an automatic season's run. *Lovely to Look At*, opened October 16, 1961, ran 630 performances. *Lorelei*, opened December 9, 1965, ran 713 performances. *Girl of the Dawn*, opened February 7, 1969, ran 583 performances.

Misty Isle, opened March 6, 1977—ran ten performances.

Jenner peered wearily at the producer. The rest of the cast had gathered round, now, half of them still in war-paint and costume. As the star, Jenner had the right to ask the question. He asked it.

"We're through, aren't we, Dan?"

Hall nodded slowly. "The theatre owner told me tonight that we're below the minimum draw. He's exercising option and throwing us out; he wants to rent the place for video. We're through, all right."

Jenner climbed methodically out of his costume, removed his makeup, cocked a sardonic eye on the spangled star on the door of his dressing cubicle, and left the theater. He had arranged to meet his old friend Walt Hollis after the show for a drink. Hollis was an electrician, currently handling the lights for one of the other Broadway shows—one of the hits. They had agreed to meet in a bar Jenner liked, on 49th Street off Sixth Avenue.

The bar was a doggedly old-fashioned one, without any of the strippers currently the mode in depuritanized New York, without B-girls, without synthetics, without video. Jenner felt particularly grateful for that last omission.

He sat slumped in the booth, a big, rumpled-looking man just beginning to get fleshy, and gripped the martini in one of his huge hands. He needed the cold drink to unwind the knot of tension in his stomach. Once, acting had unwound it for him; now, an evening on the stage wound it only a little tighter.

"What is it I've lost, Holly?" he demanded. His voice was the familiar crackling baritone of old; automatically, he projected it too far.

The man opposite him frowned, as

though he were sagging under the burden of knowing that he was Mark Jenner's oldest and possibly last friend. "You've lost a job, for one thing," Walt Hollis said lightly.

Jenner scowled. "I don't mean that. I mean—why have I lost what I once had? Why have I gone downhill instead of up? I ought to be at the peak of my acting career now; instead, I'm a has-been at forty. Was I just a flash in the pan, then, back in the Sixties?"

"No. You had talent."

"Then why did I lose it?"

"You didn't," Hollis said calmly. He took a deep sip of his gin-and-tonic, leaned back, stared at his much bigger companion. "You didn't lose anything. You just didn't gain."

"I don't understand."

"Yes, you do," Hollis said. His thumbs squeezed against his aching eyeballs for a moment. He had had this conversation with Jenner too often, in the past five years. Jenner simply did not listen. "Acting isn't the easiest profession in the world, Mark. Lord knows I don't have to tell *you* that. But what you've never grasped is that acting has toughened up tremendously since the days you broke in. And you've remained right at the same level you hit at the start of your career."

Jenner tightened his lips. He felt cold and curiously alone even in this crowded midtown bar.

"I used to be a star," he said.

"*Used* to be. Look, Mark, these days you need something colossal to drag people out of their warm homes and into a Broadway theater. Homes are too comfortable; the streets are too risky. You never can tell when you'll get mugged, if you step out after dark. So you don't step out. You stay home."

"People come out to see that British play, the one with what's-his-name in it," Jenner pointed out.

"With Bert Tylor? Of course they do. Tylor has what it takes to get people into a theater."

"And I don't, is that it?" Jenner fought to keep the crispness out of his voice.

Hollis nodded slowly. "You don't have it, Mark. Not any more."

"And what is this—this magic something-or-other that I lack?"

"It's empathy," Hollis said. "The power to get yourself across the footlights, to set up a two-way flow, to get those people in the audience so damned involved in what you're saying that it turns into part of themselves."

Jenner glowered at the small man. "You're not telling me anything I don't know. All you did just now was to define what any actor has to do."

Hollis shook his head. "It's more than that, now. Now you need special help—techniques for reaching the soul of the fellow in the six-buck seat. I've been offering you these techniques for almost a year, but you've been too damned stubborn to listen to me—too proud to admit a gadget could help you."

"I had a part lined up," Jenner said in a weak voice. "Last May Dan Hall came to me, said he was doing a play that looked good for me, and was I interested? Hell, sure I was interested. I hadn't worked for two years; I was supposed to be box-office poison. But Dan signed me."

Hollis said, "And you rehearsed all summer, and half the fall. And played the sticks half the winter while that poor hapless devil of a playwright tried to fix up the play you were killing, Mark."

Jenner sucked in his breath sharply. He began to say something, then throttled it. He shook his head slowly like a bull at bay. "Go on, Holly. I have this coming to me. Don't pull the punches."

The small man said thinly, "You weren't putting that play across the footlights, Mark. So when it finally got to New York it opened in March and closed in March. Okay. You had all the rope you needed, and you sure hung yourself! Where do you go from here?"

"Nowhere. I'm at the bottom of the heap now."

"You still have a chance," Hollis said. He leaned forward and seemed to be hanging on Jenner's words like an anxious chickenhawk. "I can help you. I've been telling you that for a year."

"I didn't want my mind tinkered with."

"You could have your name up in lights again, live in a Ninth Avenue penthouse. You could get back all the things you used to have, before—before you started to slide."

Jenner stared at the little man's pale, unlined face as if Hollis were nothing but a pane of glass, and as if all the secrets of the universe were inscribed on the back of the booth behind him. In a low voice Jenner said, "I won't get *everything* back. Fame, maybe. Money, maybe. But not everything."

"You didn't need to make your wife run away from you," Hollis said with deliberate cruelty. "But maybe you could make her want to come back."

"Would *I* want her back?"

"That's up to you. I can't answer all your questions for you. What time is it?"

"One-fifteen A.M. The morning papers will be out soon. Maybe they'll mention the closing of *Misty Isle*. Maybe there'll be a sticky little paragraph about how Mark Jenner has helped to kill another good play."

"Forget all that," Hollis said sharply. "Stop brooding about the past. You're going to start everything over tonight."

Jenner looked up, surprised. "When did I agree to let you monkey with me, Holly?"

"You didn't. But what else can you do, now?"

The surprise widened on Jenner's face. He looked down and stared grayly at the formica tabletop until the pattern blurred before his eyes. Hollis was right, Jenner realized numbly. There was nothing else to do now, no place else to go, no more ships to come in.

"Okay," Jenner said in a harsh, throaty voice. "You win. Let's get out of here."

They took the Bronx Undertube to Hollis' Riverdale home. Jenner kept a car stored in a 59th Street garage, but four martinis in little more than an hour and a half had left him too wobbly to drive, and Hollis did not have a license. At half past one in the morning, the tube was crowded; Jenner and Hollis sat in one of the middle cars, and Jenner was bitterly amused to note that nobody seemed to recognize him, or at least no one cared to come over and say, "Pardon me, but are you really..."

In the old days, Jenner recalled, his agent had forbade him strictly to enter the subways. They didn't even have the Undertubes then. But if the Mark Jenner of 1965 had entered a subway, he would have been ripped

apart, Orpheus-like, by the autograph hunters. Now, he was just another big man with a martini-glaze on his face.

Hollis remained silent all through the twenty-minute trip, and that forced Jenner back on his own inner resources. It was not pleasant for him to have to listen to the output of his own mind for twenty minutes. There were too many memories rising to confront him.

He could remember the tall, gawky teen-age Ohio boy who had overnight turned into the tall, confident New Yorker of twenty-one, back in '58. The School of Dramatic Arts; the wide-eyed hours of discovering Ibsen and Chekhov and Pirandello; the big break, the lead in *Right You Are* at a small off-broadway house, with a big-name Broadway mogul happening to come to the dingy little second-story theater to see young Jenner's mordant, incisive Laudisi.

The following autumn, a bit part in a short-lived comedy, thanks to that lucky break. Then some television work; after that, a longer part in a serious drama. Finally, in the spring of 1961, an offer to play the juvenile lead in a bit of froth called *Lovely to Look At.* Jenner was twenty-four and obscure when the show opened, that fall; when it closed, two years later, he was famous. He owned two Cadillacs, lived in a penthouse apartment, gave away vintage champagne the way other men handed away cigarettes. In 1964, while out in Hollywood doing the film version of *Lovely,* he unexpectedly married dazzling, bosomy, much-publicized, twenty-year-old Helene Bryan, current queen of the movie colony. Experts predicted that the fabulous Jenner would weary of the pneumatic blonde within months; but Helene turned out to have unexpected depth, wearing a real personality behind her sleek personality mask. In the end it was she who wearied of a down-slipping, bitterly irascible, and incipiently alcoholic Jenner, eleven years later. Eleven years, Jenner thought! They seemed like a week, and the two years of separation a lifetime.

Jenner thought back on the successes. Two years of *Lorelei;* a year and nine months of *Girl of the Dawn;* then the ill-starred turkey *Hullaballoo;* and finally his last big hit, *Bachelor Lady,* which ran a year —October 1970 to September 1971. After that, almost overnight, people stopped coming to see Mark Jenner act; he had lost his hold. In the season of 1974-75 he appeared in no less than three plays, the longest-lived of which held the boards for five weeks. Somewhere along the line, he had lost his magic. He had also lost Helene, too, in that dreadful spring of 1975 when she returned to California to stay.

And, somewhere along the line, Jenner realized he had lost the eager young man who loved Ibsen and Chekhov and Pirandello. As a professional, he had specialized almost exclusively in frothy romantic confections. That was unintentional; it was simply that he could never resist a producer waving a fat contract. It wouldn't have mattered, much, except that he kept up contact with Walt Hollis, one of the first people he had met when he came to New York, and Hollis served to remind Jenner of the Pirandello days.

Hollis had never been an actor. He was a lighting technician in the old days, and a lighting technician he still was, the best of his craft—a

slim, mousy little man who looked no older at fifty than he had at thirty. Hollis had been more than a mere electrician, though. He was a theoretician, a student of the acting technique, a graduate engineer as well. He tinkered with gadgets, and sometimes he told Jenner about them. Jenner listened with open ears, never retaining a thing.

Two years ago, Hollis had told him of something new he was developing —a technique that might be able to turn any man with a bit of acting skill into a Barrymore, into an Olivier. Jenner had laughed. In that year, '75, his main concern had been to show the world how self-sufficient he was in the face of adversity. He was not going to grasp at any electronic straws, oh, no! That would be admitting he was in trouble!

Well, he *was* in trouble. And as *Misty Isle* sank rapidly into limbo under a fierce critical barrage, Jenner bleakly realized he could sink no lower himself. Now was the time at last to listen to Hollis. Now was the time to clutch at any offer of salvation. *Now.*

"We're here," Hollis said, breaking a twenty-minute silence. "Watch your step getting out. You don't want to trip and mash up your pretty profile."

In the twenty years he had known Walt Hollis, Jenner had been inside the little man's home no more than a dozen times, and not at all in the last decade. It was a tidy little place, four small rooms, overfastidiously neat. Bookshelves lined the walls— an odd assortment of books, half literary, half technical. Hollis lived by himself; he had never married. That had made it hard for Jenner to see him socially very often; Helene had hated to visit bachelors.

Now Jenner allowed himself to be deposited in a comfortable armchair, while Hollis, ever tense, paced the worn broadloom carpet in front of him. Jenner felt completely helpless. Hollis was his last hope.

Hollis said, "Mark, I'm going to be ruthlessly frank in everything I say to you from tonight on. You aren't going to like the things I say. If you get annoyed, blow off steam. It'll do you good."

"I won't get annoyed," Jenner said tonelessly. "There isn't a thing you could say about me that wouldn't be true."

"You *will* get annoyed—so annoyed that you'll want to punch me in the face." Hollis grinned shyly. "I hope you'll be able to control that. You've got me by fifty or sixty pounds."

He paced back and forth. Jenner watched him. For twenty years, Mark Jenner had felt a sort of pity for Hollis, for the timid and retiring electrician whose only pleasure seemed to be in helping others. Sure, Hollis made good pay, and he was the best in his business. But for all that, he was just a backstage flunkey. Now he was much more than that; he was Jenner's last hope.

Hollis said, "You're going to have to withdraw from your regular activities completely for six months or so, Mark. Give up your room. Move in here with me until the treatment's finished. Then we'll see what we can do about getting you back on Broadway. It may not be easy—but if things work the way I think they'll work, you'll be climbing straight for the stratosphere the month I'm done with you."

"I'll be satisfied just to work regularly. Suppose you tell me what

you're going to do to me."

Hollis spun round and jabbed the air with a forefinger. "First let's talk about your past. You were a big hit once, Mark, then you started slipping. Now you're nowhere. Okay: *why* did it happen?"

"Yeah. You tell me. Why?"

"It happened," Hollis said, "because you failed to adapt to the changing times. You never developed the kind of emotional charge that an actor needs *now*, if he's going to reach his audience. You stayed put, worshipping the good old status quo. You acted in the 1961 way for fifteen years but by 1975 it wasn't good enough for the public or for the critics."

"Especially the critics," Jenner growled. "They crucified me!"

"The critics are paid to slap down anything that isn't what the public would consider good entertainment," Hollis said thinly. "You can't blame them; you have to blame yourself. You had an early success, and you stuck at that level until you were left behind."

Jenner nodded gravely. "Okay, Holly. Let's say I frittered away my talent. I'd rather think that than that I never had any talent in the first place. How can you help me?"

Hollis paused in his nervous march and came to light like a fretful butterfly, on a backless wooden chair. "I once explained my technique to you, and you nodded all through it, but I could see you weren't listening. You'll have to listen to me now, Mark, or I can't help you."

"I'm listening."

"I hope so. Briefly, what I'm going to do is put you through a sort of lay analysis..."

"I've *been* analyzed!"

"Keep quiet and listen for a change," Hollis said with a vigor Jenner had never heard him display before. "You'll be put through a sort of lay analysis, under deep narcohypnosis. What I want, actually, is a taped autobiography, going as deep into your life as I can dredge."

"Are you qualified to do this sort of thing?" Jenner asked.

"I'm qualified to build the machine and ask the questions. The psychiatric angle I've researched as thoroughly as possible. The rest comes out of you, until we have the tape."

"Okay," Jenner said. "So what do you do with this tape biography of me?"

"I put it aside," Hollis said. "Then I take another tape, put you under hypnosis again, and feed the new tape *into* you. The new tape will be one that I've taken from some other person. It'll be carefully expurgated to keep you from knowing the other person's identity, but you'll get a deep whiff of his personality. Then I take *your* tape and pipe it into the man who made the other one."

Jenner frowned, not comprehending. "I don't get this. Who's the other person? You?"

"Of course not. He'll be a man you've never met. You won't ever see him; you won't ever know who he is. But you'll know what kind of foods he likes and why; what he thinks when he's in bed with his wife; how he feels on a hot sweaty summer day; what he felt like the first time he kissed a girl. You'll remember his getting whopped for stealing cigarets from his father, and you'll remember his college graduation day. You'll have all his memories, hopes, dreams, fears. He'll have yours."

Jenner squinted and tried to figure out what the little man was heading

toward. "What good will all that do —to peek into each other's minds?"

Hollis smiled. "When you build up a character on stage, you mine him out of yourself—out of your own perceptions and reactions and experiences. You take the playwright's bare lines and you flesh them out by interpreting words as action, words as expression, words as carriers of emotion. If you're a good actor—which means if you have enough inner resource to swing the trick—you convince the audience that you *are* the man the program says you are. If not, you get a job selling popcorn in front of the theater."

"So..."

Hollis swept right on. "So this way you'll have *two* sets of emotions and experiences to build on. You can synthesize them into a portrayal that no other actor could begin to give." Hollis locked his thin hands together over one knee and bent forward, his mild face bright with enthusiasm now. "Besides, you'll have the advantage of being inside another man's skull, knowing what makes *him* tick; it'll give you a perspective you can't possibly have now. Combining his memories with yours, it'll be that much easier for you to get inside the audience's collective skull too, Mark. You see the picture now? You follow what I'm driving at?"

"I think so," Jenner said heavily. With awkwardly deliberate motions he pulled a cigaret out of Hollis' pack on the table, and lit it. Jenner did not normally smoke; he valued his throat too highly. But now he needed something to do with his hands, and the cigaret-lighting ritual provided it. "But tell me this—what does this other fellow get out of having *my* tape pumped into him?"

"He's a politician," Hollis said. "By which I mean a man who's in public life. He wants to run for a high office. He's a capable man, but with your talent for projection, combined with his own inner drive, he's sure to win."

"You mean you have the other man picked out already?"

"He's been picked out and waiting for nearly a year. I told him I would get a great actor to serve as the counterweight on this little see-saw. He's been waiting. I had you in mind, but it took this flop tonight to make you come around. You *will* go along with this, won't you?"

Jenner shut his eyes for a moment and drew the burning smoke deep down into his lungs. He felt like gagging. He was drained of all strength; if Hollis had snapped off the light, he would have fallen asleep on the spot, clothes and all.

He said, after a moment, "So I'll be taking another man into my head with me: And that supposedly will make me a star again. Ah—have you ever tried this stunt before?

"You and he will be the first subjects," Hollis confessed.

"And you're confident nothing will go wrong?"

"I'm not confident at all," Hollis said quietly. "It *ought* to work; but it might make both of you gibbering lunatics instead."

"And still you're ready to try this on me?" Jenner asked.

"I wouldn't want you going into it without a warning. But the odds are good in favor of a successful outcome; otherwise I wouldn't dream of asking you to play along with me."

Jenner stubbed out his half-smoked cigaret. He glanced around at the books on the shelves, at the single painting, at the austere furniture. "How long will it take?"

"About six months. I have to edit two tapes, don't forget. And we can't do all the work overnight."

"Will it cost me anything?"

Hollis laughed. "Mark, I'd pay *you* to do this if you wanted me to. I want to help you—and to see if my theories were right."

"I hope they are." Jenner stood up, coming to his full height, squaring his shoulders, trying to play the role of a successful actor even now, when he was nothing but a hollow has-been. "Okay," he said in the resonant Jenner tones. "I commit myself into thy hands, Holly. I've lost everything else a man can lose; I guess it doesn't matter much if I lose my mind."

Jenner woke up in the middle of the next afternoon. He had been asleep for thirteen hours, and he had needed it. Hollis was gone, having left a note explaining that he had to attend a rehearsal in Manhattan, and would be back about five. Jenner dressed slowly, remembering the conversation of the night before, realizing that he had effectively pledged his soul to the unmephistophelian Hollis.

He turned Hollis' sheet of notepaper over and scrawled his own note: *"Going downtown to settle my affairs. Will return later tonight."* He took the Undertube back to Manhattan, taxied from the Tube station to his hotel, and checked out, settling his bill with cash. For two years he had lived in a $20-a-week room in a midtown hotel, with no more personal property than he needed. Most of his possessions had been in storage since the breakup with Helene in '75; he kept hardly enough in the hotel room to fill a single suitcase.

He packed up and left. Dragging the suitcase that contained three changes of clothing, his makeup kit, his useless script for *Misty Isle*, and the 1974-77 volume of his scrapbook, Jenner set out for the Tube station again. It was five-thirty. If he made good connections, he could reach Hollis' place a little after six. And that gave him time for a little bit of fortification first.

He stopped at a Lexington Avenue bar and had two martinis. On the third drink he shifted to Gibsons. By the fourth, he had acquired a slatternly-looking bar girl with thick orange lipstick; he bought her the requested rye-and-soda, had one himself, then went into the washroom and got sick. When he came out, the girl was gone. Shrugging, Jenner wandered to another bar and had two more martinis, this time successfully keeping them down. A hundred yards up the block, he had another Gibson.

He reached Hollis' place at half past ten, sober enough to walk on his own steam, but too drunk to remember what he had done with his suitcase. He kept insisting that Hollis call the police and have them search for the grip, but Hollis merely smiled amiably and ignored him, leading him to the bedroom and putting him to bed. A moment before he fell asleep, Jenner reflected that it was just as well he had lost the suitcase. With it, he had lost his pitiful press clippings of the last four years, as well as his makeup kit and his final script. Now he could shed his past with alacrity; he had no albatrosses slung round his neck.

He woke at nine the next morning, feeling unaccountably clear-headed and cheerful. The smell of frying bacon reached his nostrils. From the kitchen, Hollis yelled, "Go take a

quick shower. Breakfast'll be ready when you come out."

They breakfasted in silence. At twenty of ten, they finished their coffee. Hollis said quietly, "All right, Mark. Are you ready to begin?"

Walt Hollis had rigged an experimental laboratory in his fourth room, and he installed Jenner in the middle of it. The room was no more than twelve by fifteen, and it seemed to Jenner that there was an enormous amount of equipment in it. He himself sat in a comfortable chair in the center of the room, facing a diabolically-complex bit of apparatus with fluorescent light-rings and half a dozen theatrical gelatins to provide a shifting pattern of illuminated color. There was a big tape recorder in the room, with a fifteen-inch reel primed and loaded. There were instruments that Jenner simply could not identify at all; he had no technical background, and he merely classified them as "electronic" and let it go at that.

The room's window had been carefully curtained off; the door frame was lined with felt. When Hollis chose, he could plunge the room into total darkness. Jenner felt an irrational twinge of fear. Obscurely, the machine facing him reminded him of a dentist's drill, an instrument he had always feared and hated. But this drill would bite deep into his mind.

"I won't be in the room with you," Hollis said. "I'll be monitoring from outside. Any time you want me, just raise your right hand and I'll come in. Okay?"

"Okay," Jenner muttered.

"First I've got a pill for you, Mark. Proclorperazine. It's an ataractic."

"A tranquillizer?"

"Call it that; it's just to ease your nerves. You're very tense right now, you know. You're afraid of what I'm going to do."

"Damned right I'm afraid. But you don't see me getting up and running out!"

"Of course not," Hollis said. "Here. Take it."

While Jenner swallowed the pill, Hollis busily rolled up the actor's sleeve and swabbed his arm with alcohol. Jenner watched, already relaxing, as Hollis readied a glittering hypodermic.

"This is the hypnosis-inducing drug, Mark."

"Sodium pentothal? Amytal?"

"Of that family of ego-depressants, yes." Hollis deftly discharged the syringe's contents into one of Jenner's veins. "I've had medical help in preparing this project," he said. "Sit back. Stretch your feet out. Relax, Mark."

Jenner relaxed. He was vaguely conscious of Hollis' final reassuring pat on the shoulder, of the fact that the small man had left the room, that the room had gone dark. He heard a faint hum that might have come either from the tape recorder or from the strange apparatus in the middle of the room.

Colored lights began to play on him. Wheels of bright plastic whirled before his eyes. Jenner stared, fascinated, feeling his tension drain away. All he had to do was relax. Rest. Everything would be all right. Relax.

"Can you hear me, Mark?"

"I hear you."

"Good. Do you feel any discomfort?"

"No discomfort."

"Fine. Listen to me, Mark."

"I'm listening."

"I mean *really* listening, now. Listening with your brain and not just your ears. Are you listening to me, Mark?"

"I'm listening."

"Excellent. This is what I want you to do for me, Mark. I want you to go back and think about your life. Then I want you to tell me all about yourself. Everything. From the beginning."

Spring, 1941. Mark Jenner was four years old. Mark Jenner's brother Tom had reached the ninth of the twelve years he was to have. Tom Jenner had been fighting, against his mother's express orders, and he had been knocked down and bruised.

Mark Jenner stared up at his older brother. Tom's cheek was scraped and bloody, and one side of his mouth was starting to swell puffily.

"Mama's gonna murder you," Mark chortled. "Said you wasn't supposed to fight."

"Wasn't fighting," Tom said.

"I saw you! You picked on Mickey Swenson and he knocked you down and made your face all bloody!"

"You wouldn't tell Mama that, would you?" Tom asked in a low voice. "If she asked you what happened to me, I mean."

Mark blinked. "If she asked, I'd have to tell."

"No," Tom said. His still-pudgy hands gripped Mark's shoulders painfully. "We're gonna go inside. I'm gonna tell Mama I tripped on a stone and fell down."

"But you were *fighting!* With Mickey Swenson."

"We don't have to tell Mama that. We can tell her something else—make up a story."

"But..."

"All you have to do is say I fell down, that I wasn't fighting with anybody. And I'll give you a nickel. Okay?"

Mark looked puzzled. How could he tell Mama something that was not true? It seemed easy enough. All he had to do was move his mouth and the sounds would come out. It seemed important to Tom. Already Mark was beginning to believe that Tom had really fallen, that there had been no fight.

They trooped into the house, the dirty little boy and the dirty littler one. Mrs. Jenner appeared, looming high over both of them, her hands upraised at the sight of her eldest son's battered face.

"Tom! What happened?"

Before Tom could reply, Mark said gravely, "Tom tripped on a stone. He fell down and hurt himself."

"Oh! You poor dear—does it hurt?"

As Mrs. Jenner trooped Tom off to the bathroom for repairs, Mark Jenner, four years old, experienced a curious warm sensation of pride. He had told his first conscious lie. He had spoken something that was not the truth, done it deliberately with the hope of a reward. He did not know it then, but his career as an actor had begun auspiciously.

Spring, 1954. Mark Jenner was seventeen, a junior at Noah Webster High School, Massilon, Ohio. He was six feet one and weighed one hundred fifty-two pounds. He was carrying the schoolbooks of Joanne Lauritszon, sixteen years eight months old. The Mark Jenner of 1977 saw her for what she was: a raw, newly-fledged female with a padded chest and a shrill voice. The Mark

Jenner of 1954 saw her as Aphrodite.

It took all his skill to work the conversation to the subject of the forthcoming Junior Prom. It took all his courage to invite the girl who walked at his side.

It took all his strength to endure her as she said, "But I've *got* a prom date already, Mark. I'm going with Nat Hospers."

"Oh—yes, of course. Sorry. I should have figured it out myself."

And he handed her back her books and ran stumbling away, cursing himself for his awkwardness, cursing Hospers for his car and his football-player muscles and his aplomb with girls. Mark had saved up for months for the prom; he had vowed he would die of grief if Joanne refused him. Somehow, he did not die.

Autumn, 1964. Hollywood. Mark Jenner was twenty-seven, rugged-looking and tanned, drawing three thousand dollars a week during the filming of *Lovely to Look At*. He sat at the best table in Hollywood's most exclusive night club, and opposite him, resplendent in her ermine wrap, sat the queen of filmland, Helene Bryan, lovely, moist-lipped, high-bosomed, that month blazoned on the covers of a hundred magazines in near nudity. She was twenty. She had been a coltish ten-year-old, interested only in dolls and frills, the year Mark Jenner had first thought he had fallen in love. Now he had fallen in love with her, with this $250,000-a-year goddess of sexuality.

An earlier Mark Jenner might have drawn back timidly from such a radiant beauty, but the Mark Jenner of 1964 was afraid of no one, of nothing. He smiled at the blonde girl in the ermine wrap.

He said, "Helene, will you marry me?"

"Of course, darling! Of course!"

Spring, 1975. Mark Jenner was thirty-eight. *Three Days in Marrakesh* had played nine days on Broadway. The night that closing notices went up, Mark Jenner pub-crawled until three A.M. The sour taste of cheap tap beer was in his mouth as he staggered home, feeling the ache in his feet and the soreness in his soul. He had not even bothered to remove the gray makeup from his hair. With it, he looked sixty years old, and right now he *felt* sixty, not thirty-eight. He wondered if Helene would be asleep.

Helene was not asleep; Helene was up, and packing. She wore a simple cotton dress and no makeup at all, and for once she looked her thirty-one years, instead of seeming to be in her late teens or very early twenties. She had the suitcase nearly full. Jenner had been expecting this for a long time, and now that it had come he was hardly surprised. He was too numb to react emotionally. He dropped heavily on the bed and watched her pack.

"The show closed tonight," he said.

"I know. Holly phoned and told me all about it, at midnight."

"I'm sorry I came home late. I stopped to condole with a few friends."

The brisk packing motions continued unabated. "It doesn't matter."

"Helene..."

"I'm just taking this one suitcase, Mark. I'll wire you my new address when I'm in Los Angeles, and you can ship the rest of my things out to me."

"Divorce?"

"Separation. I can't watch you this way any more, Mark."

He smiled. "No. It isn't fun to watch a man fall apart, I guess. Goodbye, Helene."

He was too drained of energy to care to make a scene. She finished packing, locked the suitcase, and went into the study to make a phone-call. Then she left, without saying goodbye. Jenner sat smiling stupidly for a while after the door slammed, slowly getting used to the fact that it was all over at last. He rose, went to the side-board, poured himself a highball-glass of gin. He gulped it. He cried.

Late winter, 1977. Mark Jenner was forty years old. He sat in a special chair in Walt Hollis' apartment while lights played on his tranquil face...

It was three months and many miles of mylar tape before Hollis was satisfied. Jenner had gone through a two-hour session each morning, reminiscing with unhesitating frankness. It had not been like the analysis at all; the analysis had not been successful because he had lied to the analyst frequently and well, digging up bits of old parts and offering them as his personal experiences, out of perverse and no doubt psychotic motivations.

This was different. He was drugged; he spewed forth his genuine past, and when the session was over he had no recollection of what he had said. Hollis never told him. Sometimes Jenner would ask, as he drowned his grogginess in a post-session cup of coffee, but Hollis would never reply.

From ten to twelve every day, Jenner recorded. From one to three, Hollis cloistered himself in the little room and edited the tapes. From three to six every day, Jenner was banished from the house while his counterpart in the project occupied the little room. Jenner never got so much as a glimpse of the other.

When the three months had elapsed, when Jenner had finally surrendered as much of his past life as he could yield, when Hollis had edited the formless stream of consciousness into a continuous, consecutive, and intelligible pattern, the time came to enter the second stage of the process. Now there were new drugs, new patterns of light, new responses. Jenner did not speak; he listened. His subconscious lay open, receptive, absorbing all that reached it and locking it in for permanent possession.

And, slowly, the personality of a man formed in Jenner's mind, embedding itself deep in layers of consciousness previously private, inextricably meshing itself with the web of memories that was Mark Jenner.

This man was like Jenner in many ways. He was physically commanding; his voice had the ring of authority, and people listened when he spoke. But, as Jenner watched the man's life shape itself from day to day, from year to compressed and edited year, he realized the difference. The other had chosen to be personally dominating as well. He, Jenner, had sacrificed his personality in order to be able to don many masks. A politician or a statesman must thrust his ego forward; an actor must bury his.

The other man, Jenner's mind told him, was forty-two years old. A severe attack of colitis five years back was the only serious illness he had had. He stood six feet one and a half, weighed 190 pounds, was mildly hyperthyroid metabolically

and never slept more than five hours a night.

He had a law degree from a major university—Hollis had edited the school's identity out. He had been married twice, divorcing his first wife on grounds of her adultery, and he had two children by his second wife, who regarded him with the awe one usually reserves for a paternal parent. He had been an assistant district attorney and had schemed for his superior's disgrace; eventually he had succeeded to the post himself, and had consciously been involved in the judicial murder of an innocent man.

Despite this, he thought of himself, by and large, as liberal and enlightened. He had served two terms in the Congress of the United States, representing an important Eastern state. He hoped to be elected to the Senate in the 1978 elections. Consulting an almanac, Jenner discovered that many Eastern states would be electing senators in 1978: Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia. About all Jenner learned from that was that his man was not officially an inhabitant of New York, Pennsylania, or Connecticut.

Before the three months ended, Jenner knew the other man's soul nearly as well as he knew his own, or perhaps better. He understood the pattern of childhood snubs and paternal goadings that had driven him toward public life. He knew how the other had struggled to overcome his shyness. He knew how it had been when the other had first had a woman; he knew, for the first time in his life, what it was like to be a father.

The other man in Jenner's head was a "good" man, dedicated and intelligent; but yet, he stood revealed as a liar, a cheat, a hypocrite, even indirectly a murderer. Jenner realized with sudden icy clarity that any human being's mind would yield the same muck of hidden desires and repressed, half-acknowledged atrocities.

The man's memories were faceless; Jenner supplied faces. In the theater of his imagination, he built a backdrop for the other's childhood, supplied an image for parents and first wife and second wife and children and friends. Day by day the pattern grew; after ninety days, Jenner had a second self. He had a double well of memories. His fund of experiences was multiplied factorially; he could now judge the agonies of one adolescence against another, now could evaluate one man's striving against another's, now could compare two broken marriages and could vicariously know the joys of an almost-successful one. He knew the other's mind the way no man before had ever known another's mind. Not even Hollis, editing the tapes, could become the other man in the way Jenner, drugged and receptive, had become.

When the last tape had been funnelled into Jenner's skull, when the picture was complete, Jenner knew the experiment had been a success. Now he had the inner drive he had lacked before; now he could reach out into the audience and squeeze a man's heart. He had always had the technical equipment of a great actor. Now he had the soul of one.

He wondered frequently about the other man and decided to keep his eye on the coming senatorial cam-

paign in the East. He wanted desperately to know who was the man who bore in his brain all of Mark Jenner's triumphs and disappointments, all the cowardices and vanities and ambitions that made him human.

He *had* to know, but he postponed the search; at the moment, returning to the stage was more important.

The show was called *No Roses for Larrabee.* It was about an aging video star named Jack Larrabee, who skids down to obscurity and then fights his way back up. It had appeared the previous fall as a 90-minute video show; movie rights had already been sold, but it was due for a Broadway fling first. The author was a plump kid named Harrell, who had written three previous triple-threat dramas. Harrell had half a million dollars in the bank, fifty thousand more in his mattress at his Connecticut villa, and maintained psychoanalysts on both coasts.

Casting was scheduled to start on October 20. The play had already been booked into the Odeon for a February opening, which meant a truncated pre-Broadway tour. Advance sales were piling up. It was generally assumed in the trade that the title role would be played by the man who had created it for the video version, ex-hoofer Lloyd Lane.

On October 10, Mark Jenner phoned his agent for the first time in six months. The conversation was brief. Jenner said, "I've been away, having some special treatments. I feel a lot better now. I want you to get me a reading for the stage version of *Larrabee.* Yeah, that's right. I want the lead."

Jenner didn't care what strings his agent had to pull to get the reading. He wasn't interested in the behind-the-scenes maneuvering. Six days later, he got a phone-call from the play's producer, J. Carlton Vincennes. Vincennes was skeptical, but he was willing to take a look, anyway. Jenner was invited to come down for a reading on the 20th.

On the 20th, Jenner read for the part of Jack Larrabee. There were only five other people in the room—Vincennes; Harrell, the playwright; Donovan, the director; Lloyd Lane; and an actor named Goldstone who was there to try out for the secondary lead. Jenner picked up the part cold, riffled through it for a few minutes, and started to read it as if he were giving his maiden speech on the floor of the Senate. He put the words across as if he had a pipeline into the subconscious minds of his five auditors. He did things with vowel shadings and with facial expressions that he had never dared to do before, and this was only improvisation as he went. He wasn't just Mark Jenner, has-been, now; he was Mark Jenner plus someone else, and the combined output was overpowering.

After twenty minutes he tired, and broke off the reading. He looked at the five faces. Four registered varying degrees of amazed pleasure and disbelief; the fifth belonged to Lloyd Lane. Lane was pale and sweat-beaded with the knowledge that he had just lost a leading role, and with it the hefty Hollywood contract that was sure to follow the Broadway one.

Two days later Jenner signed a run-of-the-show contract with Vincennes. A squib appeared in the theatrical columns the day after that:

Mark Jenner will be making a Broadway comeback in the J.C. Vincennes production of No Roses for

Larrabee. *The famed matinee idol of the Sixties has been absent from the stage for nearly a year. His last local appearance was in the ill-starred* Misty Isle, *which saw ten performances last March. Jenner reportedly has spent the past season recovering from a nervous breakdown.*

Rehearsals were strange. Jenner had always been a good study, and so he knew his lines flat by the fourth or fifth run-through. The other actors were still shambling through their parts mechanically, muttering from their scripts, while Jenner was *acting*—projecting at them, putting his character across. After a while, the disparity became less noticeable. The cast came to life, responding to the vigor of Jenner's portrayal. When they started working out in the empty theater, there were always a few dozen witnesses to the rehearsals. Backers came, and other directors, and theatrical people in general, all attracted by the rumors of Jenner's incandescent performance.

And it *was* incandescent. Not only because the part was so close to his own story, either; an actor playing an autobiographical role can easily slip into maudlin sogginess. For Jenner the part was both autobiographical and external. He interpreted it with his double mind, with the mind of a tired actor and with the mind of a potential senator on the way up. The two personalities crossbred; Jenner's performance tugged at the heart. Advance sales piled up until record figures began to dance across the ledger pages.

They opened in New Haven on the tenth of February to a packed house and rave reviews. Ten days later was the Broadway opening, right on schedule; neither driving snow nor pelting rain kept the tuxedo-and-mink crowd away from the opening-night festivities. A little electric crackle of tension hung in the air in the theater. Jenner felt utterly calm. *This is it,* he told himself. *The chips are down. The voters are going to the polls...*

The curtain rose and Jenner-as-Larrabee shuffled on stage and disgorged his first mumbled lines; he got his response and came across clearer the second time, still a bent figure with hollow cheeks and sad eyes, and the part began to take hold of him. Jack Larrabee grew before the audience's eyes. By nine o'clock, he was as real as any flesh-and-blood person. Jenner was putting him across; the playwright's words were turning to gold.

The first-act curtain line was a pianissimo; Jenner gave it and dropped to his knees, then listened to the drumroll of applause welling up out of the ten-dollar seats. The second-act clincher was the outcry of a baffled, doomed man, and Jenner was baffled and doomed as he wrenched the line out of him. The audience roared as the curtain cascaded down. Jenner drew the final line of the play, too—a triumphal, ringing asseveration of joy and redemption that filled the big house like a trumpet-call. Then the curtain was dropping, and rising again, and dropping and rising and dropping and rising, while a thunder of applause pounded at his temples; and he knew he had reached them, reached them deeply, reached them so deep they had sprung up from their own jaded weariness to acclaim him.

There was a cast party later that night, much later, in the big Broad-

way restaurant where such parties are traditionally given. Vincennes was there, belligerently waving the reviews from the early editions. The word had gone out: Jenner was back, and Jenner was magnificent. Lloyd Lane came up to him—Jenner's understudy, now. He looked shell-shocked. He said, "God, Mark, I watched the whole thing from the wings. I've never seen anything like it. You really *were* Larrabee out there, weren't you?"

Looking at this man he had elbowed aside, Jenner felt a twingle of guilt, and redness rose to his cheeks. Then the other mind intervened, the ruthless mind of the nameless politician, and Jenner realized that Lane had deserved to be pushed aside. A better actor simply had supplanted him. But there were tears in the corners of Lane's eyes.

Someone rushed up to Jenner with a gaudy magnum of champagne, and there was a *pop*! and then the champagne started to flow. Jenner, who had not had anything to drink for months, gratefully accepted the bubbling glass. Within, he kept icy control over himself. This was his night of triumph. He would drink, but he would not get drunk.

He drank. Vapid showgirls clawed through the circle of well-wishers around him to offer their meaningless congratulations. Flashbulbs glittered in his eyes. Men who had not spoken a civil word to him in five years pumped his hand. Within, Jenner felt a core of melancholy. Helene was not here; Walt Hollis—to whom he owed all this—was not here. Nor was his counterpart, the man whose mind he wore.

Champagne slid easily down his gullet. His smile grew broader. A bald-headed man named Feldstein clinked glasses with him and said. "You must really be relishing this night, Mark. You had it coming, all right. How does it feel to be a success again?"

Jenner grinned warmly. The champagne within him loosened the words and they drifted easily up through his lips. "It's wonderful. I want to thank everyone who supported me in this campaign. I want to assure them that their trust in me will be amply repaid when I reach Washington."

"Hah! Great sense of humor, Mark. Wotta fellow!" And the bald-headed man turned away, laughing. It was good that he turned away at that moment—for if he had continued to face Mark Jenner, he would have had to witness the look of dismay and terror that came over Jenner's suddenly transformed, suddenly horror-stricken face.

The play was a success, of course. It became one of those plays that everybody simply *had* to see, and everyone saw it. It promised to run for at least two seasons, which was extraordinary for a non-musical play.

But, night after night in the hotel suite Mark Jenner had rented, he wrestled with the same problem:

Who am I?

The words that had first slipped out the night of the cast party now recurred in different forms almost every day. Phantom memories obsessed him; in his deams, women he had never known came to reminisce with him about the misdeeds of a summer afternoon. He missed the children he had never fathered—the boy who was seven, and the girl who was four. He found himself reading the front pages of newspapers, scanning the Washington news, though always before he had turned first

to the theatrical pages. He detected traces of pomposity in some of his sentences.

He knew what was happening. Walt Hollis had done the job too well; the other mind was encroaching on his own, intertwining, enmeshing, ingesting. There were blurred moments in the dark of the night when Jenner forgot his own name and, temporarily nameless, dreamed the dreams the other man should have dreamed.

And, no doubt, it was the same way with the other, whoever he was. Jenner realized bleakly that a strange compulsion bound him. He lay under a geas; he had to find his counterpart, the man who shared his mind. He had to know who he was.

He asked Hollis.

Hollis had come to him in the lavish hotel suite on the sixth day after *Larrabee's* opening. The little man approached Jenner diffidently, almost as if he were upset by the magnitude of his own experiment's success.

"I guess it worked," Hollis said.

Jenner grinned expansively. "That it did, Holly! When I'm up there on the stage I have the strength I never knew I could have. Have you seen the play?"

"Yes. The third night. I was—impressed."

"Damn right you were impressed," Jenner said. "You should be, watching your Frankenstein monster in action up there. Your golem." There was nothing bitter in Jenner's tone; he was being genially sardonic.

But Hollis went pale. "Don't talk about it that way."

"True, isn't it?"

"Don't—don't ever refer to yourself that way, Mark. It isn't right."

Jenner shrugged. Then, casually, he interjected a new theme. "My alter ego—the chap you matched up with me—how's *he* doing?"

"Coming along all right," Hollis said quietly.

"Just—all right?"

"In his profession it takes time for results to become apparent. But he's building up strength, lining up an organization. I saw him yesterday, and he said he's very hopeful for the future."

"For the Senate race, you mean?"

Hollis looked past Jenner's left shoulder. "Perhaps."

Jenner scowled. "Holly—tell me his name."

"I can't do that."

"I have to know it, Holly! Please!"

"Mark, one of the terms of our agreement..."

"To hell with our agreement! Will you tell me or won't you?"

The small man looked even smaller now. He seemed to be shivering. He rose, backed toward the door of Jenner's suite. His hand fumbled for the opener button.

"Where are you going?" Jenner demanded.

"Away. I don't dare let you keep asking me about him. You're too convincing. And you mustn't make me tell you. You mustn't find out who he is. Not ever."

"Holly! Come back here! *Holly!*"

The door slammed. Jenner stood in the middle of the room staring at it, slowly shaking his head. Hollis had bolted like a frightened hare. *He was afraid of me,* Jenner realized. *Afraid I'd make him talk.*

"All right," Jenner said out loud, softly. "If you won't tell me, I'll have to find out for myself."

It took him ten days to find out. Ten days in which he delivered elev-

en sterling performances in *No Roses for Larrabee,* ten days in which he felt the increasing encroachment of the stranger in his mind, ten days in which Mark Jenner and the stranger blurred even closer together. On the seventh of those ten days, he received a phone call from Helene, long distance. He stared at her tired face in the tiny screen and remembered how like a new-blown rose she had looked on the morning after their wedding, in Acapulco, and he listened to her strangely subdued voice.

"...visiting New York again in a few weeks. Mind if I stop up to see you, Mark? After all, we're still legally married, you know."

He smiled and made an empty reply. "Be glad to see you, Helene. For old times' sake."

"And of course I want to see the play. Can I get seats easily?"

"If you try hard enough, you can scrape up a seat in the balcony for fifty bucks," he said. "But I'm allotted a few ducats for each show. Let me know the night, and I'll put a couple away for you."

"One's enough," she said quietly.

He grinned at her, and they made a bit of small talk, and they hung up. She was obviously angling for a reconciliation. Well, he wasn't so sure he'd take her back. From what he'd heard, she had done a good bit of sleeping around in the past three years, and she was thirty-four now. A successful man like Mark Jenner might reasonably be expected to take a second wife, a girl in her twenties, someone more decorative than Helene was now. After all, the *other* had married again, and he had done it only because his first wife did not mix well with the party bigwigs—not primarily because she had been cheating on him.

Three days later, Jenner knew the identity of the nameless man in his mind.

It was not really hard to find out. Jenner hired a research consultant to do some work for him. What he wanted, Jenner explained, was a list of members of the House of Representatives who fulfilled the following qualifications: they had to be in their early forties, more than six feet tall, residents of an Eastern state, married, divorced, and married again, with two children by the second wife. They had to be in their second term in the House, and had to be considered likely prospects for a higher political post in the near future. These were the facts Hollis had allowed him to retain. Jenner hoped they would be enough.

A few hours later, he had the answer he was hoping for. Only one man, of all the 475 Representatives in the 95th Congress, fit all of the qualifications. He was Representative Clifford T. Norton, Republican, of the Fifth District of Massachusetts.

A little more research filled in some of Representative Norton's background. His first wife had been named Betty, the second Phyllis. His children's names were Clifford Junior and Karen. He had gone to Yale as an undergraduate, then to Harvard Law, thereby building up loyalties at both schools. He had been elected to the House in '74 after a distinguished career as district attorney, and he had been returned by a larger plurality in the '76 elections. His term of office expired in January of 1979. He hoped to move into the other wing of the Capitol immediately, as junior senator from Massachusetts. In recent months, according to

the morgue file Jenner's man consulted, Norton had shown sudden brilliance and persuasiveness on the House floor.

It figured. Now Norton was a politician with the mind of an actor grafted to his own. The combination couldn't miss, Jenner thought.

Jenner felt an odd narcissistic fascination for this man with whom he was a brain-brother; he wanted anxiously to meet Norton. He wondered whether Norton had managed to uncover the identity of the actor whose tape Hollis had crossed with his own; and, Jenner wondered, if Norton *did* know, was he proud to share the memories of Broadway's renascent idol?

It was the last week in March, 1978. Congress was home for its Easter recess. No doubt, Representative Norton was making ample use of his new oratorical powers among the home folks, as he began his drive toward the Senate seat. On a rainy Tuesday afternoon Jenner put through a long-distance phone call to Representative Norton at his Massachusetts office. Jenner had to give his name to a secretary before Norton would come to the phone.

Norton's voice was deep and rich, like Jenner's own. He did not use a visual circuit on his phone. He said, "Hello, there, Jenner. I was wondering when you were going to call me."

"You knew about me, then?"

"Of course I knew! As soon as that play opened and I read the reviews, I *knew* you were the one!"

They arranged a meeting for two the following afternoon, at the home of Walt Hollis in Riverdale. Hollis had once given Jenner a key, and somehow Jenner had kept it. And he knew Hollis would not be home until five that afternoon, which gave them three hours to talk.

That night, Jenner phoned the theater and let the stage manager know that he was indisposed. The stage manager pleaded, but Jenner stood on his contractual rights. That evening Lloyd Lane played the part of Mack Larrabee, to the dismay of the disgruntled and disappointed audience. Jenner spent the evening pacing through the five rooms of his suite, clenching his hands, glorying masochistically in the turmoil and hatred bubbling inside him. He counted the hours of the sleepless night. In the morning, he breakfasted late, read till noon, paced the floor till half past one, and took the Undertube to Hollis' place.

He used the key to let himself in. There was no sign of Norton. Jenner seated himself in Hollis' neat-as-a-pin living room and waited, thinking that it was utterly beyond toleration that another man should walk the earth privy to the inmost thoughts of Mark Jenner.

At two fifteen, the doorbell rang. Jenner activated the scanner. The face in the lambent visual field was dark, strong-chinned, square, powerful. Jenner opened the door and stood face-to-face with the only man in the universe who knew that the nine-year-old Mark Jenner had eaten a live angleworm on a dare. Clifford Norton stared levelly at the only man in the universe who knew what he had done to twelve-year-old Marian Simms in her father's garage, twenty-nine years ago.

The two big men faced each other for a long moment in the vestibule of Hollis' apartment. They maintained civil smiles. They both breathed deeply. In Jenner's mind, thoughts whirled wildly, and he

knew Norton well enough to be aware that Norton was planning strategy, too.

Then the stasis broke.

The animal growl of hatred burst from Jenner's lips first, but a moment later Norton was roaring too, and the two men crashed heavily together in the middle of the floor. They clinched and one of Norton's legs snaked between Jenner's, tumbling him over; Norton dropped on top of him, but Jenner sidled out from under and slammed his elbow into the pit of Norton's stomach.

Norton gasped. He lashed out with groping hands and caught Jenner's throat. His hands tightened, while Jenner tugged and finally dragged Norton's fingers from his throat. He sucked in breath. His knee rose, going for Norton's groin. The two men writhed on the floor like raging lions, each trying to cripple and damage the other, each hoping to land a crushing blow, each trying ultimately to kill the other.

It lasted only a few moments. They separated with no spoken word, and came separately to their feet. They stared at each other once again, now flushed and bruised, their neat suits rumpled, their shirttails out.

"We're acting like fools," Norton said. "Or like little boys."

"We couldn't help ourselves," Jenner said. "It was a natural thing for us to fight. We leaped at each other like men trying to catch their own shadows."

They sat down, Jenner in Hollis' chair, Norton on the couch across the room. For more than a minute, the only sound was that of heavy breathing. Jenner's heart pounded furiously. He hadn't engaged in physical combat in twenty-five years.

"I didn't think it would be this way, exactly," Norton said. "There are times when I wake up and I think I'm you. Angling for a tryout, quarrelling with your wife, hitting the bottle."

"And times when *I* remember prosecuting an innocent man for murder and winning the case," Jenner said.

Norton's face darkened. "And I remember eating a live worm..."

"And I remember a scared twelve-year-old girl cornered in a garage..."

Again they fell silent, both of them slumped over, bearing the burden of each other's pasts. Norton said, "We should never have done this. Come here, and met."

"I had to see you."

"And I had to see you."

"We can't ever see each other again," said Jenner. "It's either got to be murder or a truce between us. Those few minutes when we were fighting—I actually wanted to kill you, Norton. To see you go blue in the face and die."

Norton nodded. "I had the same feeling. Neither of us can really bear the idea that someone else knows him inside and out, even though it's done us so much good in so many ways. I'll get the Senate, all right. And maybe the White House in another six years."

"And I'm back on the stage. I'll get my wife back, if I want her. Everything I lost. Yes," Jenner said. "It's worth sharing your mind. But we can't ever meet again. We're each a small part of each other, and the hatred's too strong. I guess it's self-hatred, really. But we might—we might lose control of ourselves, the way we did just now."

The front door opened suddenly. Walt Hollis stood in the vestibule, a small pinched-faced man with nar-

row shoulders and a myopic squint. And, just now, a dazed expression on his face.

"You two—how did you get here—why..."

"I still had a key," Jenner said. "I called Norton and invited him down to meet me here. We didn't expect you back so early."

Hollis' mouth worked spasmodically for ten seconds before the words came. "You should never have met each other. The traumatic effects—possible dangers..."

"We've already had a good brawl," Norton said. "But we won't any more. We've declared a truce."

He crossed the room and forced himself to smile at Jenner. Jenner summoned his craft and made his face show genial conviviality, though within all was loathing. They shook hands.

"We aren't going to see each other ever again," Jenner explained. "Norton's going to be President, and I'm going to win undying fame in the theater. And each of us will owe our accomplishments to the other."

"And to you, Hollis," Norton added.

"Maybe Norton and I will keep in touch by mail," Jenner said. "Drop each other little notes, suggestions. An actor can help a politician. A politician can help an actor. Call it long-range symbiosis, Holly. The two of us ought to go places, thanks to you."

Jenner glanced at Norton, and this time the smile that was exchanged was a sincere one. There was no need for words between them. They walked past the numb Hollis and into the small laboratory room, and methodically smashed the equipment. If Hollis were to put someone else through this treatment, Jenner thought, the competition might be a problem. He and Norton wanted no further competition in their chosen fields.

They returned to the living room and gravely said goodbye to Hollis. Jenner was calm inside, now, at last. He and Norton departed, going their separate ways once they reached the street. Jenner knew he would never see Norton again. It was just as well; he would have to live with Norton's memories for the rest of his life.

Hollis surveyed the wreckage of his lab with a stony heart. He felt cold and apprehensive. This was the reward of his labors, this was what he got for trying to help. But he should have realized it. After all, he had edited the tapes for both of them. He knew what they were. He carried the burden of both souls in his own small heart. He knew what they had done, and he knew what they were capapble of doing, now that the errors of one sanctioned the errors of the other.

Tiredly, Hollis closed the laboratory door, cutting off the sight of the wreckage. He thought of Jenner and Norton and wondered when they would realize that he knew all their secrets.

He wondered how long Jenner and Norton would let him live.

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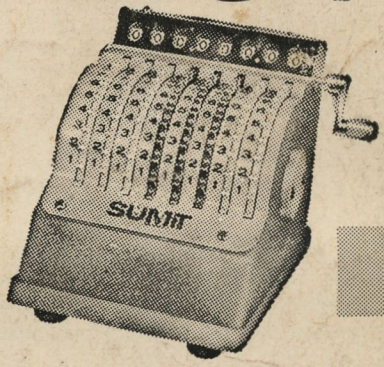

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