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WORLDS of SCIENCE FICTION

DECEMBER 1954

35 CENTS



THE JUNGLE

By Charles Beaumont

POUL ANDERSON

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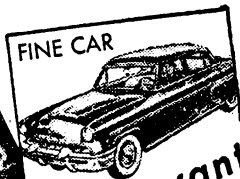
**And Gone
Tomorrow**

By Andy Offut





LANDING ON HERMES—The Moon's exploratory ship (November IF) has effected a safe landing on Hermes. Engineers will probe it for possible valuable ores and minerals. Earth is seen in the distance. Spherical or irregular in shape, asteroids are supposed to have their origin in the break-ups or explosions of larger planets. Earth's chances of being struck by one of the thousands of asteroids which whirl through our solar system are infinitesimal.



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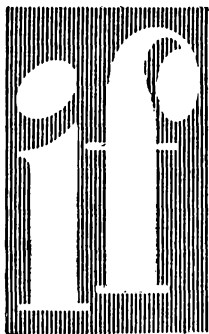
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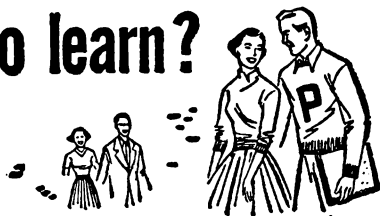
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A CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

NOT SO LONG ago, an AP dispatch from Washington, D.C., reported that the Federation of American Scientists had proposed a "six point revision" of government standards regarding security. This eminent group of scientists declared "there is a need for a new approach to security" because "loyal people at all levels of responsibility in the atomic energy program, including the commissioners themselves, might well be indicted by the same kind of standards as were applied to Dr Oppenheimer."

One of the six points offered was:

"Although association with a large number of reputedly disloyal persons might be a ground for a finding of disloyalty or flagrant indiscretion," the scientists contended that "when a few such associations can outweigh all other evidence of discretion and loyalty, the security system is in danger of becoming

monstrous."

From this it seems that these scientists think the ruling was unfair and that loyalty can be diluted. In other words, it reads to me like you can associate with four or five disloyal persons and be subject to a mere reprimand, while it would require association with thirty or forty or fifty disloyal persons to be found guilty of complete disloyalty.

All I know about such top drawer operations of the government is what I read in the newspapers. But from what I have read in the newspapers about the Oppenheimer case, it seems that the Government was fair and just and right in declaring Dr. Oppenheimer a security risk.

Loyalty is something you can't divide. It has to be 100% or nothing. If you are ninety-eight per cent loyal, you're still short as far as a vital security risk is concerned. That other two per cent is enough to give an enemy agent all he wants. "Few such associations" are a few such associations too many, regardless of evidence of other loyalty or discretion. One single indiscretion with one single spy can wreck the country. History has too many such cases to ignore them. And the United States Government leans over backwards in an effort to be fair towards spies, subversives and disloyal persons. I think this is rather obvious. Dr. Oppenheimer admitted associating with Communists, and he had failed to adhere strictly to security rules and other factors. In Russia they would have kept him under 24-hour guard and the only person he could talk to would have been himself or one of the Kremlin dogs. If he had es-

caped his keepers and had been found mingling with a bunch of U.S. capitalists, they would have shot him.

Now and then, as in any law, there are shades of guilt or innocence, but in a verdict there can be only black and white—guilty or not guilty. The security of a nation is too big a thing to gamble with. And while these brilliant men feel they are doing the right thing in proposing that standards pertaining to our national security be revised, let's remember one thing: not one of them, nor the group, is more important than the nation they serve. Therefore, whether security regulations seem right or wrong, they have submitted themselves to its dictates and decrees by becoming the eminent scientists they are.

WELL, I FINALLY went and did it.

For seven or eight years I have repeatedly convinced myself that I would never become such an addict as I have seen other people become. And I have reserved a great deal of sympathy for those stricken with this particular habit. Now, all that's changed. A few days ago I became a full fledged member of that new social order that has taken the conversation gambit away from the fishermen and the hunters and the skiers and golfers and others. And it looks like I shall become an addict too—because I obtained a gadget or an instrument or device or whatever it is that causes people to re-do their living habits more than any other invention of modern times. Because of this gadget or instrument I find that I shall spend several times its cost in partitioning

off a room, putting in a couple of doors, laying some sort of floor and decorating the joint. Then I shall get chairs and ash trays and peanut bowls and special lights. I shall put in a stock of liquid refreshments and nicknacks and short order stuff. I shall have to adjust my eating habits, my reading habits and my sleeping hours. I shall get quite used to unexpected telephone calls from people whose gadgets have gone out of order. I shall get used to unexpected people showing up at the door with the excuse that they just happened to be passing my way at a certain time. I shall become used to considerable irritation and susceptible to ulcers because it isn't working right; or because somebody else wants something I don't want or vice versa. I shall view corn served a hundred different ways and cuss myself for wasting time and sleep and go right back and do it again the next night. I shall tell bald face lies—that will out-do those of the most ardent fishermen—about how good my gadget works. I shall discuss and argue about certain electronic devices, politics, personalities, sports, parts and installations with the greatest authority—when I don't know a damn thing about them. I shall dwell in the dark, shutting out the good daylight and the wonderful view of the Catskill Mountains and the fresh air of the four seasons.

I shall spend all my free time, and a lot of time that isn't free, slouched in a chair down below the ground in my cellar . . .

For that is where my new television set is located.

—jlg



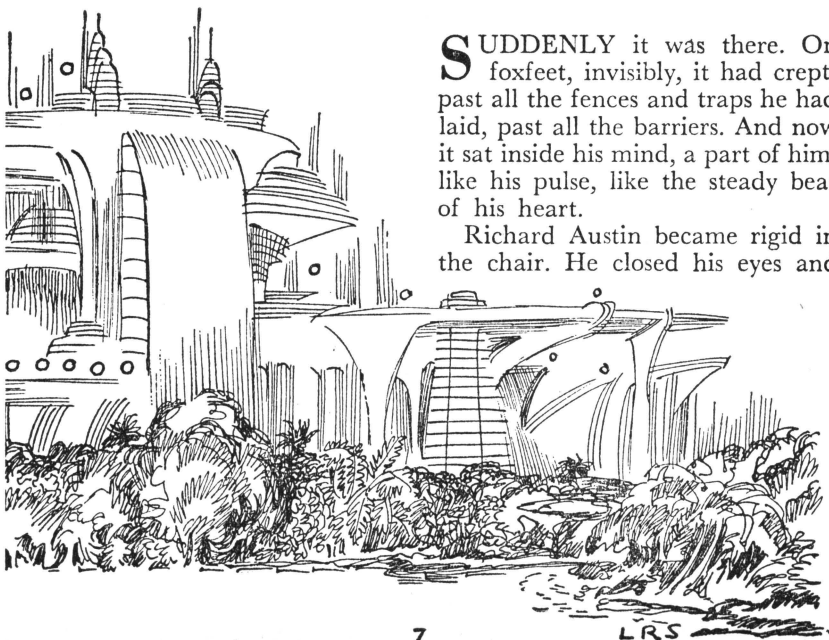
THE JUNGLE

Mbarara was Austin's city, his dream, a civilization carved from the screaming depths of the Jungle. The culture and sciences of his people would see that it lived. And the "magic" of old Bohawah would see that it died . . .

BY CHARLES BEAUMONT

SUDDENLY it was there. On foxfeet, invisibly, it had crept, past all the fences and traps he had laid, past all the barriers. And now it sat inside his mind, a part of him, like his pulse, like the steady beat of his heart.

Richard Austin became rigid in the chair. He closed his eyes and



strained the muscles in his body until they were silent and unmoving as granite; and he listened to the thing that had come again, taking him by surprise even while he had been waiting. He listened to it grow—it *seemed* to grow; he couldn't be sure: perhaps he was merely bringing it into sharper focus by filtering out the other constant sounds: the winds that whispered through the foliage of balloon-topped trees the murmurous insect-drone of all the machines that produced this wind and pumped blood through the city from their stations far beneath the night-heavy streets. Or, perhaps, it was because he was searching, trying to lay hands on it that the thing seemed to be different tonight, stronger, surer. Or—what did it matter?

He sat in the darkened room and listened to the drums; to the even, steady throb that really neither rose nor diminished, but held to that slow dignified tempo with which he'd become so familiar.

Then quickly he rose from the chair and shook his head. The sounds died and became an indistinguishable part of the silence. It was only concentration, he thought, and the desire to hear them that gave them life . . .

Richard Austin released a jagged breath from his swollen lungs, painfully. He walked to the bar and poured some whiskey into a glass and drank most of it in a single swallow: it went down his dry throat like knives, forcing the salivary glands back into action.

He shook his head again, turned and walked back across the living room to the far door. It swung out

noiselessly as his hand touched the ornamented circle of hammered brass.

The figure of his wife lay perfectly still under the black light, still and pale, as she had lain three hours before. He walked toward her, feeling his nostrils dilate at the acrid medicine smells, harshly bitter and new to his senses. He blinked away the hot tears that had rushed, stinging, to his eyes; and stood for a time, quietly, trying not to think of the drums.

Then he whispered: "Mag . . . Mag, don't die tonight!"

Imbecile words! He clenched his fists and stared down at the face that was so full of pain, so twisted with defeat, that now you could not believe it had once been different, a young face, full of laughter and innocence and courage.

The color had gone completely. From the burning splotchy scarlet of last week to this stiff white mask, lifeless, brittle as drying paste. And covered over with perspiration that glistened above her mouth in cold wet buttons and over her face like oil on white stone. The bedding under and around her was drenched gray.

Austin looked at the bandage that covered his wife's head, and forced away the memory, brutally. The memory of her long silver hair and how it had fallen away in clumps in his hands with a week after she had been stricken . . .

But the thoughts danced out of control, and he found himself remembering all the terrible steps in this nightmare.

The scientists had thought it malaria, judging from the symptoms, which were identical. But

that was difficult to accept, for malaria had been effectively conquered—powerful new discoveries in vaccines having been administered first, and then the primary cause of the disease itself—the *Anopheles* mosquito—destroyed completely. And the liquid alloys which formed the foundations for this new city eliminated all the likely breeding places, the bogs and marshlands and rivers. No instance of re-occurrence of the disease had been reported for half a century. Yet—malarial parasites were discovered in the bloodstreams of those first victims, unmistakable parasites that multiplied at a swift rate and worked their destruction of the red corpuscles. And the chemists immediately had to go about the business of mixing medicines from now ancient prescriptions, frantically working against time. A disquieting, even a frightening thing; but without terror for the builders of the new city; not sufficient to make them abandon their work or to spark mass evacuations. Panic was by now so forgotten by most that it had become a new emotion, to be learned all over again.

It had not taken very long to relearn, Austin recalled. Terror had come soon enough. The stricken—some thirty husky workmen, engineers, planners—had rallied under the drugs and seemed to be out of critical condition when, one night, they had all suffered relapses, fallen into fevered comas and proceeded to alternate between unconsciousness and delirium. The scientists were baffled. They tried frenziedly to arrest the parasites, but without success. Their med-

icines were useless, their drugs and radium treatments and inoculations—all, useless. Finally, they could only look on as the disease took new turns, developed strange characteristics, changed altogether from what they had taken to be malaria to something utterly foreign. It began to assume a horrible regular pattern: from prolonged delirium to catatonia, whereby the victim's respiratory system and heartbeat diminished to a condition only barely distinguishable from death. And then, the most hideous part: the swift decomposition of the body cells, the destruction of the tissues . . .

Richard Austin carefully controlled a shudder as he thought of those weeks that had been the beginning. He fingered out a cigarette from his pocket, started to strike it, then broke the cylinder and ground its bright red flakes into his palms.

No other real hint had been given, then: only the disease. Someone had nicknamed it "Jungle Rot"—cruel, but apt. The victims *were* rotting alive, the flesh falling from them like rain-soaked rags; and they did not die wholly, ever, until they had been transformed into almost unrecognizable mounds of putrescence . . .

He put out a hand and laid it gently against his wife's cheek. The perspiration was chill and greasy to his touch, like the stagnant water of slew banks. Instinctively his fingers recoiled and balled back into fists. He forced them open again and stared at the tiny dottles of flesh that clung to them.

"Mag!" It had started already! Wildly, he touched her arm, ap-

plying very slight pressure. The outer skin crumbled away, leaving a small wet gray patch. Austin's heart raced; an involuntary movement caused his fingers to pinch his own wrists, hard. A wrinkled spot appeared and disappeared, a small, fading red line.

She's dying, he thought. Very surely, very slowly, she's begun to die—Mag. Soon her body will turn gray and then it will come loose; the weight of the sheet will be enough to tear big strips of it away . . . She'll begin to rot, and her brain will know it—they had discovered that much: the victims were never completely comatose, could not be adequately drugged—she will know that she is mouldering even while she lives and thinks . . .

And why? His head ached, throbbed. *Why?*

The years, these past months, the room with its stink of decay—everything rushed up, suddenly, filling Austin's mind.

If I had agreed to leave with the rest he thought, to run away, then Mag would be well and full of life. But—I didn't agree . . .

He had stayed on to fight. And Mag would not leave without him. Now she was dying and that was the end of it.

Or—he turned slowly—was it? He walked out to the balcony. The forced air was soft and cool; it moved in little patches through the streets of the city. Mbarara, *his* city; the one he'd dreamed about and then planned and designed and pushed into existence; the place built to pamper five hundred thousand people.

Empty, now, and deserted as a

gigantic churchyard . . .

Dimly he recognized the sound of the drums, with their slow muffled rhythm, directionless as always, seeming to come from everywhere and from nowhere. Speaking to him. Whispering.

Austin lit a cigarette and sucked the calming smoke into his lungs. He remained motionless until the cigarette was down to the cork.

Then he walked back into the bedroom, opened a cabinet and took a heavy silver pistol.

He loaded it carefully.

Mag lay still; almost, it seemed to Austin, expectant, waiting. So very still and pale.

He pointed the barrel of the pistol at his wife's forehead and curled his finger around the trigger. Another slight pressure and it would be over. Her suffering would be over. Just a slight pressure!

The drums droned louder until they were exploding in the quiet room.

Austin tensed and fought the trembling, gripped the pistol with his other hand to steady it.

But his finger refused to move on the curved trigger.

After a long moment, he lowered his arm and dropped the gun into his pocket.

"No." He said it quietly, undramatically. The word hit a barrier of mucus and came out high-pitched and child-like.

He coughed.

That was what they wanted him to do—he could tell, from the drums. That's what so many of the others had done. Panicked.

"No."

He walked quickly out of the room, through the hall, to the ele-

vator. It lowered instantly but he did not wait for it to reach bottom before he leapt off and ran across the floor to the barricaded front door.

He tore at the locks. Then the door swung open and he was outside; for the first time in three weeks—outside, alone, in the city.

He paused, fascinated by the strangeness of it. Impossible to believe that he was the only white man left in the entire city.

He strode to a high-speed walkway, halted it and stepped on. Setting the power at half with his passkey, he pressed the control button and sagged against the rail as the belt whispered into movement.

He knew where he was going. Perhaps he even knew why. But he didn't think about that; instead, he looked at the buildings that slid by silently, the vast rolling spheres and columns of colored stone, the balanced shapes that existed now and that had once existed only in his mind. And he listened to the drums, wondering why the sound of them seemed natural and his buildings suddenly so unnatural, so strange and disjointed.

Like green balloons on yellow sticks, the cultured "Grant Wood" trees slipped by, uniform and straight, arranged in aesthetically pleasing designs on the stone islands between belts. Austin smiled: The touch of nature. Toy trees, ruffling in artificial winds . . . It all looked, now, like the model he had presented to the Senators. About as real and lifelike.

Austin moved like a carefully carved and painted figurine, incredibly small and lonely-looking on the empty walkway. He thought

about the years of preparation; the endless red tape and paper work that had preceded the actual job. Then of the natives, how they had protested and petitioned to influence the Five-Power governments and how that had slowed them down. The problem of money, whipped only by pounding at the point of over-population, again and again, never letting up for a moment. The problem of workers. The problems, problems . . .

He could not recall when the work itself had actually begun—it was all so joined. Laying the first railroad could certainly not have been a particle as beset with difficulty. Because the tribes of the Kenya territory numbered into the millions; and they were all filled with hatred and fury, opposing the city at every turn.

No explanation had satisfied them. They saw it as the destruction of their world and so they fought. With guns and spears and arrows and darts, with every resource at their disposal, refusing to capitulate, hunting like an army of mad ants scattered over the land.

And, since they could not be controlled, they had to be destroyed. Like their forests and rivers and mountains, destroyed, to make room for the city.

Though not, Austin remembered grimly, without loss. The white men had fine weapons, but none more fatal than machetes biting deep into neck flesh or sharp wooden shafts coated with strange poisons. And they did not all escape. Some would wander too far, unused to this green world where a

man could become hopelessly lost within three minutes. Others would forget their weapons. And a few were too brave.

Austin thought of Joseph Fava, the engineer, who had been reported missing. And of how Fava had come running back to the camp after two days, running and screaming, a bright crimson nearly dead creature out of the worst dreams. He had been cleanly stripped of all his skin, except for the face, hands, and feet. . . .

But, the city had grown, implacably, spreading its concrete and alloy fingers wider every day over the dark and feral country. Nothing could stop it. Mountains were stamped flat. Rivers were damned off or drained or put elsewhere. The marshes were filled. The animals shot from the trees and then the trees cut down. And the big gray machines moved forward, gobbling up the jungle with their iron teeth, chewing it clean of its life and all its living things.

Until it was no more.

All of Kenya, and most of Tanganyika, leveled, smoothed as a highway is smoothed, its centuries choked beneath millions and millions of tons of hardened stone.

The birth of a city . . . It had become the death of a world.

And Richard Austin was its murderer.

AS HE traveled, he thought of the shaman, the half-naked, toothless Bantu medicine man who had spoken for most of the tribes. "You have killed us, and we could not stop you. So now we will wait, until you have made your city and

others come to live here. Then you will know what it is to die." Bokawah, who lived in superstition and fear, whom civilization had passed, along with the rest of his people. Who never spoke again after those words, and allowed himself to be moved to the wide iron plateau that had been built for the surviving natives.

Bokawah, the ignorant shaman, with his eternal smile . . . How distinct that smile was now!

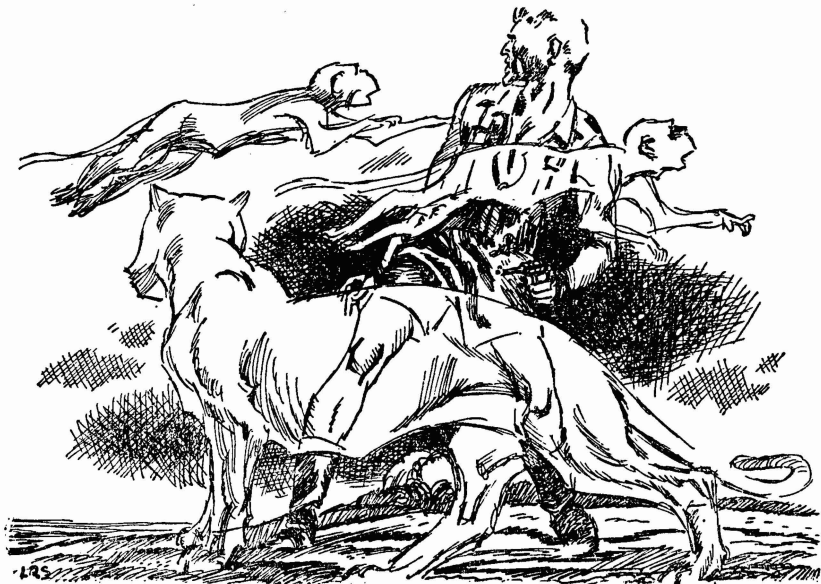
The walkway shuddered, suddenly, and jarred to a noisy grinding stop. Austin pitched forward and grasped the railing in order to break his fall.

Awareness of the silence came first. The eerie dead silence that hung like a pall. It meant that the central machines had ceased functioning. They had been designed to operate automatically and perpetually; it was unthinkable that these power sources could break down!

As unthinkable as the drums that murmured to life again beyond the stainless towers, so loud now in the silence, so real.

Austin gripped his pistol tightly and shook away the panic that had bubbled up like acid in his chest. It was merely that the power had gone off. Strike out impossible, insert improbable. Improbabilities happen. The evil spirits do not summon them, they *happen*. Like strange diseases.

I am fighting, he thought, a statistical paradox. That's all. A storage pile of coincidences. If I wait—he walked close to the sides of the buildings—and fight, the graph will change. The curve will . . .



The drums roared out a wave of scattered sound, stopped, began again . . .

He thought a bit further of charts; then the picture of Mag materialized, blocking out the thick ink lines, ascending and descending on their giant graphs.

Thinking wasn't going to help. . .

He walked on.

Presently, at the end of a curve in the city maze, the 'village' came into view, suspended overhead like a gigantic jeweled spider. It thrust out cold light. It was silent.

Austin breathed deeply. By belt, his destination was only minutes away. But the minutes grew as he walked through the city, and when he had reached the lift, hot pains wrenched at his muscles. He stood by the crystal platform, working action back into numbed limbs.

Then he remembered the silence, the dead machines. If they were

not functioning, then the elevator—

His finger touched a button, experimentally.

A glass door slid open with a pneumatic hiss.

He walked inside, and tried not to think as the door closed and the bullet-shaped lift began to rise.

Below, Mbarara grew small. The treated metals glowed in a dimming lace of light. And the city looked even more like the little clay model he had built with his hands.

At last movement ceased. Austin waited for the door to slide open again, then he strode out onto the smooth floor.

It was very dark. The artificial torches did not even smolder: their stubs, he noticed, were blackened and cold.

But the gates to the village lay open.

He looked past the entrance into

the frozen shadows.

He heard the drums, throbbing from within, loud and distinct. But—ordinary drums, whose sound-waves would dissipate before ever reaching the city below.

He walked into the village.

The huts, like glass blisters on smooth flesh, sat silent. Somehow, they were obscene in the dark, to Austin. Built to incorporate the feel and the atmosphere of their originals and yet to include the civilized conveniences; planned from an artistic as well as a scientific standpoint—they were suddenly obscene.

Perhaps, Austin thought, as he walked, perhaps there was something to what Barney had been saying . . . No—these people had elected to stay of their own free will. It would have been impossible to duplicate *exactly* the monstrous conditions under which they had lived. If not impossible, certainly wrong.

Let them wallow in their backward filth? In their disease and corruption, let them die—merely because their culture had failed to absorb scientific progress? No. You do not permit a man to leap off the top of a hundred-story building just because he has been trained to believe it is the only way to get to the ground floor—even though you insult him and blaspheme against his gods through your intervention. You restrain him, at any cost. Then, much later, you show him the elevator. And because he is a man, with a brain no smaller than yours, he will understand. He will understand that a crushed superstition is better than a crushed head. And he will thank you, eventually.

That is logic.

Austin walked, letting these thoughts form a thick crust. He felt the slap of the pistol against his thigh and this, also, was comforting.

Where were they now? Inside the huts, asleep? All of them? Or had they, too, contracted the disease and begun to die of it? . . .

Far ahead, at the clearing which represented the tip of the design, a glow of light appeared. As he approached, the drums grew louder, and other sounds—voices. How many voices? The air was at once murmurous and alive.

He stopped before the clearing and leaned on the darkness and watched.

Nearby a young woman was dancing. Her eyes were closed, tightly, and her arms were straight at her sides like black roots. She was in a state of possession, dancing in rhythm to the nearest drum. Her feet moved so fast they had become a blur, and her naked body wore a slick coat of perspiration.

Beyond the dancing woman, Austin could see the crowd, squatted and standing, swaying; over a thousand of them—surely every native in the village!

A clot of brown skin and bright white paint and brilliant feathers, hunched in the firelight.

An inner line of men sat over drums and hollow logs, beating these with their palms and with short sticks of wood. The sounds blended strangely into one—the one Austin had been hearing, it seemed, all his life.

He watched, fascinated, even though he had witnessed Bantu ceremonies countless times in the

past, even though he was perfectly familiar with the symbols. The little leather bags of hex-magic: nail-filings, photographs, specks of flesh; the rubbing boards stained with fruit-skins; the piles of bones at the feet of the men—old bones, very brittle and dry and old.

Then he looked beyond the natives to the sensible clean crystal walls that rose majestically, cupping the area, giving it form.

It sent a chill over him.

He walked into the open.

THE THRONG quieted, instantly, like a scream cut off. The dancers caught their balance, blinked, drew in breath. The others lifted their heads, stared.

All were turned to dark unmoving wax.

Austin went past the gauntlet of eyes, to one of the painted men.

"Where is Bokawah?" he said loudly, in precise Swahili. His voice regained its accustomed authority. "Bokawah. Take me to him."

No one moved. Hands lay on the air inches above drums, petrified.

"I have come to talk!"

From the corner of his eye, Austin felt the slight disturbance. He waited a moment, then turned.

A figure crouched beside him. A man, unbelievably old and tiny, sharp little bones jutting into loose flesh like pins, skin cross-hatched with a pattern of white paint, chalky as the substance some widows of the tribes wore for a year after the death of their mates. His mouth was pulled into a shape not quite a smile, but resembling a smile. It revealed hardened toothless gums.

The old man laughed, suddenly. The amulet around his chicken-neck bobbed. Then he stopped laughing and stared at Austin.

"We have been waiting," he said, softly, Austin started at the perfect English. He had not heard English for a long time; and now, coming from this little man . . . Perhaps Bokawah had learned it. Why not? "Walk with me, Mr. Austin."

He followed the ancient shaman, dumbly, not having the slightest idea why he was doing so, to a square of moist soil. It was surrounded by natives.

Bokawah looked once at Austin, then reached down and dipped his hands into the soil. The horny fingers scratched away the top-dirt, burrowed in like thin, nervous animals, and emerged, finally, holding something.

Austin gasped. It was a doll.

It was Mag.

He wanted to laugh, but it caught in his throat. He knew how the primitives would try to inflict evil upon an enemy by burying his effigy. As the effigy rotted, symbolically, so would . . .

He snatched the doll away from the old man. It crumbled in his hands.

"Mr. Austin," Bokawah said, "I'm very sorry you did not come for this talk long ago." The old man's lips did not move. The voice was his and yet not his.

Austin knew, suddenly, that he had not come to this place of his own accord. He had been summoned.

The old man held a hyena's tail in his right hand. He waved this and a slight wind seemed to come

up, throwing the flames of the fire into a neurotic dance.

"You are not convinced, even now, Mr. Austin. Aiii. You have seen suffering and death, but you are not convinced." Bokawah sighed. "I will try one last time." He squatted on the smooth floor. "When you first came to our country, and spoke your plans, I told you—even then—what must happen. I told you that this city must not be. I told you that my people would fight, as *your* people would fight if *we* were to come to your land and build jungles. But you understood nothing of what I said." He did not accuse; the voice was expressionless. "Now Mbarara lies silent and dead beneath you and still you do not wish to understand. What must we do, Mr. Austin? How shall we go about proving to you that this Mbarara of yours will *always* be silent and dead, that your people will never walk through it?"

Austin thought of his old college friend Barney—and of what Barney had once told him. Staring at Bokawah, at this scrawny, painted savage, he saw the big Texan clearly, and he remembered his wild undergraduate theories—exhuming the antique view of primitives and their religions, their magics.

"Go on, pal, laugh at their tabus," Barney, who was an anthropologist, used to be fond of saying, "*sneer, while you throw salt over your shoulder. Laugh at their manas, while you blab about our own 'geniuses'!*"

He had even gone beyond the point of believing that magic was important because it held together the fabric of culture among these

natives, because it—and their religious superstitions—gave them a rule for behavior, therefore, in most cases, happiness. He had even come to believe that native magic was just another method of arriving at physical truths.

Of course, it was all semantic nonsense. It suggested that primitive magic could lift a ship into space or destroy disease or . . .

That had been the trouble with Barney. You could never tell when he was serious. Even a social anthropologist wouldn't go so far as to think there was more than one law of gravity.

"Mr. Austin, we have brought you here for a purpose. Do you know what that purpose is?"

"I don't know and I don't—"

"Have you wondered why you, alone, of all your people, have been spared? Then—listen to me, very carefully. Because if you do not, then what has happened in your new city is merely the beginning. The winds of death will blow over Mbarara and it will be far more awful than what has been." The medicine man stared down at the scattered piles of bones. Panther bones, Austin knew—a divination device. Their position on the ground told Bokawah much about the white people.

"Go back to your chiefs. Tell them that they must forget this city. Tell them that death walks here and that it will always walk, and that their magic is powerful but not powerful enough. It cannot stand against the spirits from time who have been summoned to fight. Go and talk to your chiefs and tell them these things. Make them believe you. *Force* them to under-

stand that if they come to Mbarara, they will die, in ways they never dreamed, of sickness, in pain, slowly. Forever."

The old man's eyes were closed. His mouth did not move at all and the voice was mechanical.

"Tell them, Mr. Austin, that at first you thought it was a strange new disease that struck the workers. But then remind them that your greatest doctors were powerless against the contagion, that it spread and was not conquered. Say these things. And, perhaps, they will believe you. And be saved."

Bokawah studied the panther bones carefully, tracing their arrangement.

Austin's voice was mechanical, also. "You are forgetting something," he said. He refused to let the thoughts creep in. He refused to wonder about the voice that came through closed lips, about where the natives could have found soil or fresh panther bones or . . . "No one," he said to the old man, "has fought back—yet."

"But why would you do that, Mr. Austin, since you do not believe in the existence of your enemy? Whom shall you fight?" Bokawah smiled.

The crowd of natives remained quiet, unmoving, in the dying fire-light.

"The only fear you hold for us," Austin said, "is the fear that you may prove psychologically harmful." He looked at the crushed doll at his feet. The face was whole; otherwise, it lay hideously disfigured.

"Yes?"

"Right now, Bokawah, my government is sending men. They will

arrive soon. Why they do, they will study what has happened. If it is agreed that your rites—however harmless in themselves—cause currents of fear—are in *any way* responsible for the disease—you will be given the opportunity to go elsewhere or—"

Or, Mr. Austin?"

"—you will be eliminated."

"Then people will come to Mbarara. Despite the warnings and the death, they will come?"

"Your magic sticks aren't going to scare away five hundred thousand men and women."

"Five hundred thousand . . ." The old man looked at the bones, sighed, nodded his head. "You know your people very well," he murmured.

Austin smiled. "Yes, I do."

"Then I think there is little left for us to talk about."

Austin wanted to say, No, you're wrong. We must talk about Mag! She's dying and I want to keep her from dying. But he knew what these words would mean. They would sketch his real feelings, his fears and doubts. And everything would be lost. He could not admit that the doll was anything more than a doll. He must not!

The old man picked up a calabash and ran water over his hands. "I am sorry," he said, "that you must learn the way you must."

A slow chant rose from the natives. It sounded to Austin like Swahili, yet it was indistinct. He could recognize none of the words, except *gonga* and *bagana*. Medicine? The man with the medicine? It was a litany, not unlike the Gregorian chants he had once heard, full of overpowering melan-

choly. Calm and ethereal and sad as only the human voice can be sad. It rode on the stale air, swelling, diminishing, cutting through the stench of decay and rot with profound dignity.

Austin felt the heaviness of his clothes. The broken machines had stopped pumping fresh breezes, so the air was like oil, opening the pores of his body, running coldly down his arms and legs.

Bokawah made a motion with his hand and sank back onto the smooth floor. He breathed wrackingly, and groaned as if in pain. Then he straightened and looked at Austin and hobbled quickly away.

The drums began. Movement eased back into the throng and soon the dancers were up, working themselves back into their possessed states.

Austin turned and walked quickly away from the ceremony. When he had reached the shadows, he ran. He did not stop running until he had reached the lift, even while his muscles, long dormant, unaccustomed to this activity, turned to stone, numb and throbbing stone.

He stabbed the button and closed his eyes, while his heart pumped and roared sound into his ears and colored fire into his mind. The platform descended slowly, unemotional and calm as its parts.

Austin ran out and fell against a building, where he tried to push away the image of the black magic ceremony, and what he had felt there.

He swallowed needles of pain into his parched throat.

And the fear mounted and mounted, strangling him slowly . . .

THE TOWERS of Mbarara loomed, suddenly, to Austin, more unreal and anachronistic than the tribal rites from which he had just come. Stalagmites of crystal pushing up to the night sky that bent above them; little squares and diamonds and circles of metal and stone. Office buildings; apartments; housing units; hat stores and machine factories and restaurants; and, cobwebbing among them, all these blind and empty shells, the walkways, like colored ribbons, like infinitely long reptiles, sleeping now, dead, still.

Or, were they only waiting, as he wanted to believe?

Of course they're waiting, he thought. People who know the answers will come to Mbarara tomorrow. Clear-headed scientists who have not been terrorized by a tribe of beaten primitives. And the scientists will find out what killed the workers, correct it, and people will follow. Five hundred thousand people, from all over the closet-crowded world, happy to have air to breathe once more—air that hasn't had to travel down two-hundred feet—happy to know the Earth can yet sustain them. No more talk, then, of "population decreases"—murder was a better word—; no more government warnings screaming "depopulation" at you . . .

The dream would come true, Austin told himself. Because it must. Because he'd promised Mag and they'd lived it all together, endless years, hoped and planned and fought for the city. With Mbarara, it would begin: the dark age of a sardine can world would end, and life would begin. It would

be many years before the worry would begin all over—for half the earth lay fallow, wasted. Australia, Greenland, Iceland, Africa, the Poles . . . And perhaps then the population graph would change, as it had always changed before. And men would come out of their caverns and rat-holes and live as men.

Yes. But only if Mbarara worked. If he could show them his success here . . .

Austin cursed the men who had gone back and screamed the story of what had happened to the other engineers. God knew there were few enough available, few who had been odd enough to study a field for which there seemed little further use.

If they'd only kept still about the disease! Then others would have come and . . .

Died. The word came out instantly, uncalled, and vanished.

Austin passed the Emperor, the playhouse he had thought of that night with Mag, ten years before. As he passed, he tried to visualize the foyer jammed with people in soup-and-fish and jeweled gowns, talking of whether the play had meat or not. Now, its marbled front putting out yellow glow, it looked foolish and pathetic. The placard case shone through newly gathered dust, empty.

Austin tried to think of what had been on this spot originally. Thick jungle growth alone. Or had there been a native village—with monkeys climbing the trees and swinging on vines and white widows mourning under straw roofs?

Now playing: JULIUS CAESAR. Admission: Three coconuts.

Be still. You've stayed together all this time, he thought, you can hold out until tomorrow. Tcheletchew will be here, sputtering under his beard, and they'll fly Mag to a hospital and make her well and clear up this nonsense in a hurry.

Just get home. Don't think and get home and it will be all right.

The city was actually without formal streets. Its plan did not include the antiquated groundcars that survived here and there in old families. Therefore, Mbarara was literally a maze. A very pretty maze. Like an English estate—Austin had admired these touches of vanished gentility—the areas were sometimes framed by green stone hedges, carved into functional shapes.

He had no difficulty finding his way. It was all too fresh, even now, the hours of planning every small curve and design, carefully leaving no artistic 'holes' or useless places. He could have walked it blindfolded.

But when he passed the food dispensary and turned the corner, he found that it did not lead to the 'copter-park, as it should have. There were buildings there, but they were not the ones they ought to have been.

Or else he'd turned the wrong—He retraced his steps to the point where he had gone left. The food dispensary was nowhere in sight. Instead he found himself looking at the general chemistry building.

Austin paused and wiped his forehead. The excitement, of course. It had clouded his mind for a moment, making him lose his way.

He began walking. Warm per-

spiration coursed across his body, turning his suit dark-wet, staining his jacket.

He passed the food dispensary.

Austin clenched his fists. It was impossible that he could have made a complete circle. He had built this city, he knew it intimately. He had walked through it without even thinking of direction, in the half-stages of construction, and never taken a wrong step.

How could he be lost?

Nerves. Nothing strange in it. Certainly enough had happened to jar loose his sense of direction.

Calmly, now. Calmly.

The air hung fetid and heavy. He had to pull it into his lungs, push it out. Of course, he could go below and open the valves—at least *they* could be operated by hand. He could, but why? It would mean hunching down in a dark shaft—damn, should have made that shaft larger! And, there were, after all, enough openings in the sealing-bubble to keep a breathable flow of oxygen in circulation. If the air was heavy and still outside the bubble, he could scarcely expect it to be different within . . .

He looked up at the half-minar-



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eted tower that was one of the 'copter repair centers. It was located in exactly the opposite direction to the one he thought he'd taken.

Austin sank onto a stone bench. Images floated through his mind. He was lost; precisely as lost as if he had wandered into the jungle that had stood here before the building of Mbarara, and then tried to find his way back.

He closed his eyes and saw a picture, startlingly clear, of himself, running through the matted growths of dark green foliage, stumbling across roots, bumping trees, face grotesque with fear, and screaming . . .

He opened his eyes quickly, shook away the vision. His brain was tired; that was why he saw such a picture. He must keep his eyes open.

The city was unchanged. The park, designed for housewives who might wish to pause and rest or chat, perhaps feed squirrels, surrounded him.

Across the boating lake was the university.

Behind the university was home.

Austin rose, weakly, and made his way down the grassy slope to the edge of the artificial lake. Cultured city trees dotted the banks: the lake threw back a geometrically perfect reflection.

He knelt and splashed water into his face. Then he gulped some of it down and paused until the ripples spread to the center of the lake.

He studied his image in the water carefully. White skin, smooth cheeks, iron-colored hair. Good clothes. A dolichocephalic head, evenly spaced, the head of a twen-

ty-second century civilized . . .

Above his reflection, Austin detected movement. He froze and blinked his eyes. As the water smoothed, the image of an animal appeared on the surface, wavering slightly. A small animal, something like a monkey. Like a monkey hanging from the branches of a tree.

Austin whirled around.

There was only the darkness, the golfing-green lawn, the cultured trees—smooth-barked, empty.

He passed a hand through his hair. It was a trick of the lights. His subconscious fear, the shimmering water . . .

HE WALKED quickly to the darkened boathouse, across its floor, his footsteps ringing against the stone, echoing loudly.

At the end of the miniature pier, he untied a small battery boat and jumped into it. He pulled a switch at the side, waited, forced himself to look back at the deserted bank.

The boat moved slowly, with only a whisper of sound, through the water.

Hurry, Austin thought. Hurry—Oh God, why are they so slow!

The boat, whose tin flag proclaimed its name to be Lucy, sliced the calm lake with its toy prow, and, after many minutes, reached the center.

The glow was insufficient to make the approaching bank distinct. It lay wrapped in darkness, a darkness that hid even the buildings.

Austin narrowed his eyes and stared. He blinked. It was the fuzziness of the luminescence, of

course, that gave movement to the bank. That made it seem to seethe with unseen life.

It was only that his position to the shadows kept changing that made them turn into dark and feral shapes; trees, where buildings surely were, dense growth . . .

It was the milky phosphorescence of the metals that rose like marsh-steam from the nearing water . . .

He thought of stepping off the boat into a jungle, a magical forest, alive and waiting for him.

He closed his eyes and gripped the sides of the boat.

There was a scraping. Austin felt the cement guard, sighed, switched off the battery and leapt from the little boat.

There was no jungle. Only the lime-colored city trees and the smooth lawn.

The university sat ahead like a string of dropped pearls: blister-shaped, connected by elevated tunnels, twisting, delicate strands of metal and alloy.

Austin scrambled up the embankment. It must be very late now. Perhaps nearly morning. In a few hours, the others would arrive. And—

He halted, every muscle straining.

He listened.

There were the drums. But not only the drums, now.

Other sounds.

He closed his eyes. The airless night pressed against him. He heard a rustling noise. Like something traveling through dense brush. He heard, far away, tiny sounds, whistlings, chitterings. Like monkeys and birds.

He tore open his eyes. Only the

park, the city.

He went on. Now his feet were on stone and the park was behind him. He walked through the canyons of the city again, the high buildings, metal and crystal and alloy and stone.

The rustling noises did not cease, however. They were behind him, growing nearer. Bodies, moving through leaves and tall grass.

Austin suddenly remembered where he'd heard the sound before. Years ago, when he'd first visited this land. They had taken him on a hunting expedition, deep into the wild country. They were going to bag something—he forgot exactly what. Something strange. Yes; it was a wild pig. They had walked all day, searching, through the high tan grass, and then they had heard the rustling sounds.

Exactly like the sound he heard now.

Austin recalled the unbelievable fury of the boar, how it had disembowled two dogs with a couple of swipes of those razor-sharp fangs. He recalled clearly the angry black snout, curled over yellow teeth.

He turned and stared into the darkness. The noises grew steadily louder, and were broken by yet another sound. Deep and guttural, like a cough.

As the sound behind him came closer, he ran, stumbled and fell, pulled himself from the stone and ran until he had reached a flight of steps.

The coughing noise was a fast, high-pitched scream now, a grunting, snorting, a rush of tiny feet galloping across tamped earth, through dry grass. Austin stared blindly, covered his face with his

arms and sank back until the sound was almost upon him.

His nostrils quivered at the animal smell.

His breath stopped.

He waited.

It was gone. Fading in the distance, the rustling, the coughing, and then there was the silence of the drums again.

Austin pressed the bones of his wrist into his throbbing skull to quiet the ache.

The panic drained off slowly. He rose, climbed the steps and walked through the shadowed courtyard onto the campus.

It was a vast green plain, smooth and grassy.

Across from it, in sight, was Austin's home.

He gathered his reason about him like a shield, and decided against taking the other routes. If he had gotten lost before, it could happen again. Certainly now, with his imagination running wild.

He must cross the campus.

Then it would be all right.

He began treading, timorously at first, listening with every square inch of his body.

The shaman's voice slithered into his mind. Chanting. ". . . you were destroying us against our will, Mr. Austin. Our world, our life. And such is your mind, and the mind of so-called 'civilized' men, that you could not see this was wrong. You have developed a culture and a social structure that pleased you, you were convinced that it was right; therefore, you could not understand the existence of any that differed. You say us as ignorant savages—most of you did—and you were anxious to 'civilize' us. Not

once did it occur to you that we, too, had our culture and our social structure; that we knew right and wrong; that, perhaps, we might look upon you as backward and uncivilized . . ."

The sound of birds came to Austin; birds calling in high trees, circling impossibly in the night sky.

" . . . we have clung to our 'magic', as you call it, and our 'superstitions' for longer than you have clung to yours. Because—as with your own—they have worked for us. Whether magic can be explained in Roman numerals or not, what is the difference, so long as it works? Mr. Austin, there is not only one path to the Golden City—there are many. Your people are on one path—"

He heard the chatter of monkeys, some close, some far away, the sound of them swinging on vines, scolding, dropping to mounds of foliage, scrambling up other trees.

"—my people are on another. There is room in this world for both ways. But your failure to grasp this simple fact has killed many of us and it will kill many more of you. For we have been on our path longer. We are closer to the Golden City . . ."

Austin clapped his hands to his ears. But he did not stop walking.

From the smooth stone streets, from the direction of the physics department, came the insane trumpeting of elephants, their immense bulks crashing against brittle bark, their huge feet crunching fallen limbs and branches . . .

The shaman's voice became the voice of Barney Chadfield . . . He spoke again of his theory that if one could only discover the unwrit-

ten bases of black magic and apply formulae to them, we would find that they were merely another form of science . . . perhaps less advanced, perhaps more.

The sounds piled up, and the feelings, and the sensations. Eyes firmly open, Austin thought of Mag and felt needled leaves slap invisibly against his legs; he smelled the rot and the life, the heavy, wild air of the jungle, like animal steam; the odors of fresh blood and wet fur and decaying plants; the short rasping breath of a million different animals—the movement, all around him, the approaches, the retreats, the frenzied unseen . . .

Eyes open he felt and smelled and heard all these things; and saw only the city.

A pain shot through his right arm. He tried to move it: it would not move. He thought of an old man. The old man had a doll. The old man was crushing the doll's arm, and laughing . . . He thought of reflexes and the reaction of reflexes to emotional stimuli.

He walked, ignoring the pain, not thinking about the arm at all.

“ . . . tell them, Mr. Austin. Make them believe. Make them believe . . . Do not kill all these people . . . ”

When he had passed the Law College, he felt a pain wrench at his leg. He heard another dry-grass rustle. But not behind him: in front. Going forward.

Going toward his apartment.

Austin broke into a run, without knowing exactly why.

There was a pounding, a panting at his heels: vaguely he was aware of this. He knew only that he must get inside, quickly, to the sanity of his home. Jaws snapped,

clacked. Austin stumbled on a vine, his fingers pulled at air, he leapt away and heard the sound of something landing where he had just been, something that screamed and hissed.

He ran on. At the steps, his foot pressed onto something soft. It recoiled madly. He slipped and fell again, and the feel of moist beaded skin whipped about his legs. The thunder was almost directly above. He reached out, clawed lose the thing around his leg and pulled himself forward.

There was a swarming over his hands. He held them in front of his eyes, tried to see the ants that had to be there, slapped the invisible creatures loose.

The apartment door was only a few feet away now. Austin remembered his pistol, drew it out and fired it into the night until there were no more bullets left.

He pulled himself into the lobby of the unit.

The door hissed closed.

He touched the lock, heard it spring together.

And then the noises ceased. The drums and the animals, all the wild nightmare things—ceased to be. There was his breathing, and the pain that laced through his arm and leg.

He waited, trembling, trying to pull breath in.

Finally he rose and limped to the elevator. He did not even think about the broken machines. He knew it would work.

It did. The glass doors whirred apart at his floor, and he went out into the hall.

It was soundless.

(Continued on page 113)

FIRST STAGE: MOON

They were the first men on Earth to reach the Moon and return. They were heroes of the world; they would be welcomed, and acclaimed and feted for the greatest achievement in history. Nations would seek them out . . .

BY DICK HETSCHER

WHAT COLOR'S the sky?"
"Still black as the place the devils throw their old razor blades."

"We'll hear it when we hit air."

"Pretty soon now?"

"A few minutes yet."

"Man! My foot's working off at the knee."

"John awake? Hey, John, you awake?"

"How could I sleep through this? Whad'ya want?"

"Nothing."

"What's she look like?"

"Earth?"

"Of course."

"A blue beach-ball with a white halo 'round it."

"What's below us?"

"Part of Asia, I think. Lots of clouds . . . I see India."

"Man, it's hot in here!"

"Hell, wait'll we hit air!"

"We all awake? Anyone asleep say 'aye.'"

"Aye."

"No one's asleep. I heard four voices."

"If anyone can sleep through this they've got my blessings. Woof! My neck."

"You think you've got it bad; they've got me squeezed in with the camera equipment; I'm bent at the knees and again at the waist."

"Ah, but after we land."

"Ah, after we land."

"And if we land, of course."

"If we land? Hell, listen to him; he's still got doubts! Unchain that libido, son, we're men of the world now!"

"Of two worlds."

"And speaking of worlds—we'll rule the world, gentlemen!"

"For a day!"

"Maybe a week!"

"Three rousing huzzahs for us!"

"Oops—stand back there, son; these gentlemen just got back from the moon!"

"The first men on the moon!"
"The discoverers of a new world!"
"Hell, Pop, I knew it was there all the time!"
"We'll be famous—our names will be on cereal boxes."
"The hell with it; I'm tired."
"Wish I could see out! What's it like?"

"Same as before."
"I can see someone's leg and the back of someone's head. Damn this lousy intercom. I can't even recognize voices."

"What's it matter who we are? We're just a lousy pack of sardines 'til we hit Earth."

"Good old Earth—hell with it."
"Gentlemen—I would make a speech!"

"Also the hell with you!"
"I'm gonna drown if I keep sweating like this."

"Shut up! I've got something more important to say than your groaning."

"If we must."
"The next speaker will be the honorable—who the hell are you anyway, bub?"

"We . . . have just . . . visited . . . the moon!"

"Hear!"
"There's one more important thing we have to do before we land."

"You mean slow down?"
"One thing to talk over. Look . . . Williams! I have a strong suspicion you signed on this trip for some reason beside glory. Right?"

"Cause Earth was getting too crowded for me."

"How about you, Wong?"
"Needed a change, too, I guess."

Been breathing fresh air and seeing people too long. Got sick of it."

"And John?"
"Well . . . , I suppose I know what you're heading at. This isn't exactly a Jules Verne type trip to the moon, 'for the glory and advancement of science.' 'Least it isn't to me. I got sick of science when I was studying for my *master's*. Sick of seeing what people were doing with it. I thought a few new worlds might ease the tension back on Earth . . . before everything gets blown to pieces."

"That's what I mean; a few new worlds to explore might slow lousy man in his wild race to the backside of heaven. New frontiers. New excitements. It's bound to tie people closer together in spite of their prejudices."

"But the glory! Don't forget the glory!"

"The patriotic zeal!"
"Yeah, the patriotic zeal! I feel the same way you do. Here we're trying to bring the world closer together and we have to do it in the name of the arms effort of a single nation."

"War rocket experiment 282Z"
"Well, at least we'll be able to say what we think and we'll be important enough for a while so that people will listen to us."

"Yeah, when we get down, they're going to say 'speech!'"

"They are that!"
"And we are going to speak!"

"Heroes for a day!"
"Maybe two days!"

"And people will listen to us; not just America—the whole damn world. Show people a larger goal, one big enough for the planet, and

all the little power goals will fall away fast."

"If we can say the right things . . ."

"They'll have to listen to us. The U.S.; Russia; . . . all the little countries."

"Here she comes—I hear something!"

"Atmosphere!"

"We're back home!"

"Crisis number six. We can't fail now."

"Before it's too loud to talk . . . listen to me. When we land, don't say anything. We'll all get a good sleep and a bath before we say a word. Right?"

"Right!"

"Just give 'em the pictures and samples and demand a nap. Everybody ready for the final blasting?"

"Here's where I lose another two gallons of blood."

"I hope we fall in a lake. I'm thirsty as a horse."

"Man, it's hot!"

"A hundred-twenty seconds!"

"I'm not at all sure I can last this . . . that's straight stuff. Be ready to take over mine, too, Wong; just in case."

"Hell, you better last!"

"Sixty seconds!"

"Testing light signals—are they on?"

"O.K. here."

"Yeah."

"Thirty seconds! Got your lights, Mike?"

"Yeah."

"Mine, too."

"This is gonna be awful!"

"Ten seconds. Five. Four. Three. Two."

"O.K. Here she comes!"

"Well, man! man! man! Are we down?"

"We sure hit *something!*"

"We made it! Oh, God, we made it!"

"We're back! Did we get back?"

"Where'd we land?"

"Ocean. Atlantic."

"Well, break the hull. It's awful in here!"

"Hang on! You may get a ducking."

"Air! Real Air! Whoosh—don't let anyone go and poison this air with cobalt bombs."

"Everyone here? Help Joe up, there! Thataboy! how's it go?"

"Man, we're really here! Where's the reception committee?"

"They were watching us with telescopes; remember? They were going to clear all ships and planes out of the area we were heading for."

"Remember; no speeches 'til we get a rest."

"Yeah, and then I know what I'm going to say."

"We can't do much but we sure can do *something.*"

"Stage one: Moon. Stage two: Earth."

"Here they come . . . planes!"

"Look dignified."

"Man, look at that rocket out there; it's passing all the rest; coming down from above them."

"Looks practically wingless. It's going to beat the rest by a decade . . . hey, it's black!"

"Is it ever fast! What country is it? I can't see any identification."

"Say, it's going to pass us right by. Look out, it's diving."

"What's it dropping?"

"Look out! Bomb! Bomb! Bomb! Duck . . ."

THE \$1000 PRIZE WINNING STORY
in IF's College Science Fiction Contest

And Gone Tomorrow

BY ANDY OFFUT

Here is the best story submitted in answer to the theme question: "What Will Life in America Be Like 100 Years From Now?" . . . Written by an undergraduate at the University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky, it pictures the America of 2054 as part of a world empire run by an Italian dictator and very similar to that of the ancient Caesars and the early Roman Empire. There is one language, one religion and customs and laws have changed to suit the times. But, basically, human nature hasn't changed and there is the omnipresent clash of faction against faction. The theme is that a dictatorship is the only perfect form of government. If there is a moral, it is that there is no permanent form of government.



Illustrated by Paul Orban

HE SAT down suddenly. He stared up at the man.

"Say it again," he muttered.

He knew what the answer would be even before the man repeated it in that quiet voice.

"This is June 3, 2054."

The fellow wasn't kidding him. He was serious enough. But a couple of minutes ago it had been May 15, 1954. He looked at his watch and grunted. Less than four minutes ago it had been 1954. Reality. Now it was June 3, 2054. There were four steel walls. There was a steel chair. There were no windows.

He tried to take it calmly. But the unbelievable horror of being *where* he was and *when* he was

and the man calmly repeating, "This is June 3, 2054," screamed for release.

"No! No! You're lying! It's impossible!" He grabbed the man's tunic and drew back a doubled fist. His chair went over behind him.

Then a stiff thumb jabbed him in the short ribs and he grunted and went down.

"This is June 3, 2054. You are still in Louisville, Kentucky. You are standing in a room adjoining the laboratory in the Time Building on 3rd Street at Eastern Parkway. This is the receiving room. My name is Kevin Ilaria. You've come through time. Is that so impossible to grasp? You're a thinking man. Educated!"

He looked up from the floor.

"Well?"

"So I'm a thinking man and an educated man. And what happens? I'm sapped. I'm shanghaied. I'm walking down Confederate Place to my old fraternity house at 1:00 in the morning. I've just had a row with my girl. I'm heading for the fraternity house to see who'll go down to Herman's and get good and drunk with me. And somebody clobbers me. The next thing I remember I'm sitting in a steel chair in a steel room without any windows. Just like this one. There's a man standing there. A man with watery, myopic eyes under bushy brows and his hair parted in the middle. He's Doctor Borley, of the University of Louisville Chemistry Department. There's another man with him. A little fellow with thick glasses and a crew cut and eyes like the slits between closed venetian blinds. He's Doctor Schink, of the Psychology Department. They're talking about me."

"Umn hmn. Now you're beginning to sound normal. Doctors Borley and Schink are our agents in 1954. Do you know where you were?"

"I told you. In some sort of steel room without win—"

The man made an impatient gesture with his hand. "No, I mean *where*. You were in a steel chamber in the Daynolds Metals Plant. It stood on this spot in 1954. Two people knew—know—about that room."

"Doctor Borley and Doctor Schink?"

"I'm glad you've calmed down. Now we can talk."

Jay wasn't quite ready to calm down. "You stand there in that Roman outfit and talk about being calm. To me. To me, Jay Welch, a history major who took his AB from the University of Louisville in 1950. Jay Welch, average guy, who got into an average argument with the girl he pinned in 1950 and went for a walk to drown his sorrows and wound up one hundred years from where—when—he started. I—"

"Then you admit you've come through Time?"

"I may as well."

Ilaria cursed quietly. "But you're not an average guy. You have a working knowledge of chemistry and biology and physics and history and a few arts and sociology and psychology and geopolitics and literature and the English language as spoken in AD 1954. You hope to be successful as a writer. You're Public Relations Consultant with Duo-Point, one of the biggest corporations in your nation in 1954."

"Yes," Jay Welch said. "And I make good money. Even better than a bus driver or a steam-fitter. So?"

"So here you are. 1954's representative to 2054." Ilaria was only a man. He could not keep the flourish and the Hollywood grandeur out of his voice.

One of the requirements for entering IF's College Science Fiction Contest was that the contestant be a "simon pure" amateur—never having been published professionally. This is Andy Offut's first published story, and it has been accorded the same editing we give to professional manuscripts. No rewriting or revisions have been made. See November IF for complete announcement of this and the six other winners in this nation-wide contest.

"Yes! And what happens tomorrow when I don't show up for work? What happens in a few days when people find out I've disappeared? What happens when they find out Julie was the last person I was with? What—"

"You're getting yourself worked up again, Jay Welch. Don't you think we have thought of those things? We've brought you across one hundred years, Jay Welch."

"Yes," Jay said quietly, flatly. "Yes." Then just as flatly, just as quietly he said, "Why?"

"So you've remembered to wonder about that at last." Ilaria smiled. Jay noticed that the smile was one-sided and pulled back the left corner of Ilaria's mouth. He stood there and looked down at Jay Welch, who had forgotten that he was sitting on the floor. His tunic was white and there were three diamond-shaped silver pieces in a vertical line on each elbow-length sleeve. There was a wide blue stripe and a narrow silver stripe at the hem of his tunic and at his sleeves. He wore sandals. His belt was leather and there was a holstered pistol of some sort hanging at his left hip. In tiny blue script above his left breast pocket were the words 'Trib. Ilaria'. On the pocket was a red disk with the letters PR. A silver-worked blue cloak was flung over his shoulders. Except for the identification and the odd fabric of his clothes and the holstered gun he looked very like a young Roman of the first century.

Ilaria's slow smile pulled back the left corner of his mouth. "Because you are who you are and what you are. Because you attended the University of Louisville and

Doctors Borley and Schink knew you. Because they chose you. Merely because they chose you. They might've chosen anyone else.

"We've your personality pretty well mapped out. We expected violence. That's why I'm here. I'm a psychologist and an anthropologist. I'm a fast-talker and I can convince people and place them at ease. I'm also big enough to handle you, Jay Welch."

From his position on the floor Jay looked up at Ilaria and decided the man from 2054 was big enough. Jay Welch was six feet one inch tall. He weighed one seventy-three and wore a 40-long suit. Kevin Ilaria was bigger.

Jay was forced to grin. The tall blond man was a likeable guy, at that. A human being.

"Who are you?"

"Kevin Ilaria. Doctor of Psychology. That entitles me to the silver band on my tunic. Also a Tribune. That entitles me to the blue stripe and the three silver diamonds and the gun."

"A Tribune? In what? Of what?"

"In the Forces. In the actual ranks, a Tribune commands 7,000 men, 250 planes or a base, or 40 tanks. But I've never had a chance to go into the field. There has been no cause to fight. Meantime I'm stationed at Standiford Field as second-in-command. A friend of mine named Rinaldi fills in for me. He's a Sub-Tribune.

"I've been specializing in the study of Time."

"The way you say Time it sounds as though it were capitalized. Where I come from Time with a capital T is a magazine."

Kevin Ilaria laughed. He reached down a hand. "Get up," he said, and, taking Jay's forearm, helped him to his feet.

"Let's go," he said.

Jay didn't bother to ask where they were going. He followed the Tribune out the door and into the hall. On the wall just outside the door, was a black box. Two squares cut into it shone with a faint white light. Ilaria paused and shielded the lighted areas a moment with his hand, and Jay saw the light go out in the room they had just left. Ilaria closed the door. As he turned, Jay saw the white letters PR emblazoned on the back of his cloak.

"This way," he said. Jay noticed that Ilaria walked on his right, so that the Tribune's gun was between them.

"The way I said Time, it is capitalized. It means all the Time since the beginning. It's a corporation, like your Duo-Point. Only much larger, and much less known. Our job is to learn."

"That's a big order," Jay commented. "You learn by—borrowing—emissaries?"

Ilaria laughed again. "Thanks for the phraseology, but it wouldn't worry me if you called it 'kidnaping' or 'shanghaiing.' You're right, of course. We learn by sending men from this age to other ones, and by pulling men from other ages to this one. Doctor Schink is our Emissary to 1954. His real name is Clyde Gabrinaldi. Borley is our contact there . . . rather, then."

"Well I'll be damned! I've gone to Clyde a lot of times for advice."

The left corner of Ilaria's mouth pulled back as his grin widened. "Umn hm. He's married, too.

With a child. He's there for good."

Jay was afraid to ask if emissaries from the past to 2054 were "there for good" too. He changed the subject.

"You started to tell me before—"

"Oh, yes. I'm to be your teacher and companion. But I'll try to give you a quick fill-in. Our world of 2054 is quite different from yours. And, we hope, in better shape. We've proved that the only way to maintain world peace is by world government. And the only successful type of government is a dictatorship."

Jay gasped. "You mean the entire world—has reverted to *dictatorship*?"

Ilaria laughed. "Not *reverted*. We finally accepted it as the only logical form of government for an entire world."

"What happens when the dictator goes wild? He always has."

The smile was there again. "You're not quite ready for that," Ilaria told him. "But, it has been taken into consideration."

Out of the corner of his eye, Jay saw the slight puff of Ilaria's chest, the self-satisfied square of his shoulders, the quick set of his jaw. He wondered what part Tribune Kevin Ilaria played in the 'dictator control' this world had provided.

"The system has worked and is working. See this?"

They turned a corner in the corridor and faced a great domed room. On the far wall hung a white tapestry of something like 40 x 40 foot dimensions. On it, emblazoned in letters of red and yellow made to look like flame, were the characters PpB. In the lower right-hand corner, in white outlined with blue,

was the same PR that Ilaria wore. Jay waited for the Tribune's explanation.

"PpB stands for Pax per Bello," Ilaria explained. "Peace through War. That slogan was written in 1967 by Julius and adapted in 1971 as official."

"Julius?"

"Yes. The first Dictator."

Things were beginning to click in Jay's mind.

"I think I know what PR stands for," he said. "Pax Romana."

As always, Ilaria smiled. "That's right," he said.

THE COMMAND-CAR marked with the PR symbol pulled over and stopped.

"What is it? Who are you?" the driver demanded.

The Captain on the seat beside him peered into the blackness and cursed.

The man who had waved the vehicle to a halt walked away.

"Here!" the Captain cried. "What in blazes is going on here? Why'd you stop us? Centurion! Stop that man!"

The two Centurions in the back seat looked at the Captain for a moment, then they both jumped out and ran after the man.

An ellipsoidal grey thing streaked out of the darkness, landed in the driver's lap and thudded to the floor of the car. The Captain threw open his door and started to climb out. The driver bent over to see what it was.

At that moment the driver, the command-car and the Captain blew up.

The silence that followed was

broken by the blast of a submachine gun as it struck down the two centurions.

"Take their weapons," said a brittle voice.

The detachment of soldiers from the garrison at Tel Aviv stopped and looked around.

"Sir, what is it?" asked a guard anxiously.

"Terribly quiet out here; something's up," the Lieutenant muttered calmly.

There were seven of them. The Lieutenant, the Centurion, and five legionaries. They had grown accustomed to the quiet life of garrison men in a calm, conquered city. When there is nothing tangible to be guarded, a guard's life is a dull one. The guns they carried were the symbol of their authority, and had never been used for any other purpose.

They looked around. The dirty, once-white buildings rose close on either side. There was no moon. There was no sound. The darkness and the silence could have been cut with a knife.

The Lieutenant grinned. He didn't feel much like grinning. He spoke. He didn't feel much like talking, either.

"This darkness is thick," he said. "You could cut it with a knife. Wish I had a knife."

He got a knife. The men had just started to laugh when the Lieutenant got it.

Between his shoulder blades.

As the Lieutenant toppled forward, the Centurion dodged close against the dirty stone wall and yelled "Spread out!"

They killed a lot of the shadowy,

green-clad attackers, but there were only six of them and they were cornered. When the enemy drove a tank into the alley and sprayed them with its mounted gun they died.

"Take their weapons," said a quiet voice.

The half-track rolled to a stop. "Where, Sir?" the driver wanted to know.

"Beyond that big crater over there. The sun glinted on metal. I'm sure of it. Didn't you see it?"

"No, Sir." The driver craned his neck. There was nothing but barren rubble and bomb craters and torn, twisted metal and ruined buildings.

"There are all sorts of old automobiles lying around out there, Sir," the driver volunteered.

"Yes, and they've been here long enough to get good and rusty," the Captain snapped. "This is something else."

The driver craned his neck. There was nothing but rubble.

Eight men in the back of the half-track leaped to their feet when they heard the faint clicking of KCN-H₂SO₄ guns and the buzz of an old gamma gun and the sharp bark of a very old sub machine-gun. But a grenade landed on the truck and another rolled under it.

Another wreck was added to the rubble.

"Take their weapons, if there are any left," said a quiet voice.

AND IN the more peaceful city of Louisville, Jay Welch was introduced to Kevin Ilaria's best friend, his adjutant at Standiford Field.

Jay took a liking to Sub-Tribune Jason Rinaldi the moment he felt the fellow's firm grip.

"Jason is adjutant," Ilaria explained. "And one of the few 'field soldiers' who manages to get along with Caesar's Pretorian Prefect, Lamberti. How he does it, I don't know. Lamberti's absolutely unbearable."

"Prejudice. Middle-class prejudices," Rinaldi grinned. He was short and very dark with a lot of black hair.

Ilaria's left cheek cracked into a long dimple as he smiled. "He picks on me because I'm a serious psychologist."

Rinaldi laughed. "As a psychologist, Kevin, you're an excellent bridge player. As a soldier—"

"Just remember who's got three bars and who has two."

Rinaldi waved his hand and shrugged. "They pass 'em out to psych boys wholesale," he said, and ducked Ilaria's swing. "Slow reflexes, too," he added as he turned to go.

Ilaria stopped him at the door and murmured a few sentences.

Jay caught something about sabotage at Standiford. Rinaldi seemed to be attributing it to the Commanding Officer there.

"Nice guy," Jay said as the door closed behind Rinaldi.

"You said it. Good officer, too. He'll root out the bird who's playing around out there. Can't figure out why it's being done."

"Factions," Jay said, "—within factions."

"Little ones always exist, I guess. Have you finished with the history films?"

"I've seen them, yes. I'm still try-

ing to digest them.”

“The language give you much trouble?”

“Quite a bit, but I think I got most of it.

“One man,” Jay went on wondering. “One man. A Captain in the Italian Army.

“The Communist forces in Indo-China had been driven back and Captain—then Major—Lollabrigida went in after them.

“The defeat was becoming so terrible that the Kremlin dealt itself a playing hand rather than the dummy it had been playing. Red forces came piling in. Lollabrigida and his Italian troops stopped them cold. Then he seemed to sway. And, when the Commies pounced for the kill, they were trapped, pocketed, and annihilated.

“American newspapers and commentators began to call Major Julius Lollabrigida ‘Julius Caesar.’ Italy became big overnight. The Big Three became Russia, the United States, and Italy. Lollabrigida appealed to America—sometime in there they made him a Colonel, but he was actually telling the Generals and the Italian government what to do—for aid in going ahead aggressively.

“And America turned him down. They were still playing ‘wait and see.’ They waited. They waited too long. The Commies got tired of waiting around and sent a couple of jet bombers with A-bombs.”

“Now you’re telling me things,” Ilaria interrupted. “I’m pretty shady on that period myself.”

Jay shrugged. “It was after my time. All I know is what the films show. Two planes, each with a seven-man crew, and each carry-

ing one atomic bomb, were dispatched from an airbase somewhere near Juneau.” Jay stopped.

“And?”

The man from 1954 choked. It was hard to be objective about this. It wasn’t so easy for him to pass off as the film had done.

“And—” he hesitated.

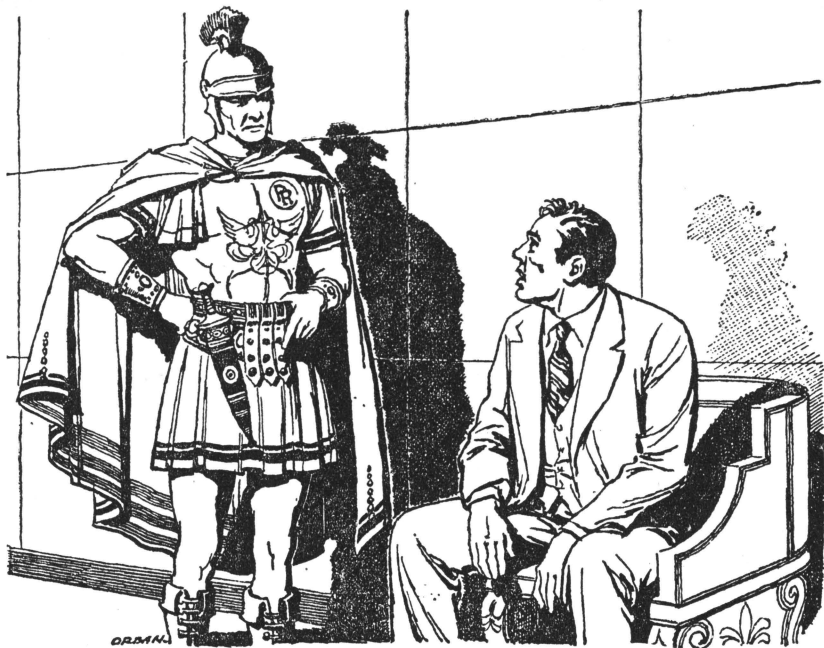
“It’s over, Jay. It’s done with. It doesn’t even concern you anymore. It belongs to a past era.”

“One was headed for New York. The other struck farther inland . . . for Washington. The first one was shot down by an F-117 border patrol plane. The other one got through. It—it levelled the capitol. Almost completely. The White House and the Pentagon were destroyed.”

Ilaria sat quietly and waited. Jay didn’t go on.

“Thus removing the United States of America, as such, from a prominent position in the world picture,” Ilaria said.

“Yes. I can’t understand it. Everything just folded up. SAC didn’t even get off the ground. And Colonel Lollabrigida, by then Commander-in-Chief of the UN forces, sent fifty planes, each with one A-bomb, over the Kremlin. One was shot down over Vladivostok, but the bombardier pulled the firing pin as the ship crashed and most of Vladivostok was destroyed. Six other planes made it to their destinations and dropped their loads. I can’t remember the cities . . . one was a new super airbase near Moscow. Five of the planes returned. None had managed to reach Moscow. Half the world was in ruins. The Pope begged that the War be stopped.”



ORRMA

Ilaria snorted. "He knew they'd hit Rome!"

Jay looked at him. "Is that what you think?"

Ilaria shrugged and flashed that quick, winning smile. "There are no other motives, are there?"

Jay stared. What changes had taken place in religious philosophy in this hard-bitten world of 2054?

Kevin Ilaria shrugged, smiling. "That's unimportant. Let's go on with the history lesson. Then what?"

"Uh-oh, yes. As I remember Julius Lollabrigida, to be trite, launched an 'all-out offensive' against Communist forces everywhere. People were afraid of Russia, but they were afraid of Lollabrigida and Rome, too. So they joined him. Aid poured into the

UN. Czechoslovakia was taken and Poland and Hungary and finally only the old Russia of pre World War II days was left. And in they went.

"Then Lollabrigida's saboteurs exploded an atomic bomb in the heart of Moscow. After that it was pretty easy sledding."

"Astounding how a nation seems to fall apart when its capitol and its leaders are gone," Ilaria remarked.

"Everybody and everything folds," Jay said. "Moral dies."

"After the demolition of Moscow and other parts of the USSR, Italy stood at the top. General of the Armies Julius Lollabrigida marched back into Italy and into Rome and into the capitol and up on a pedestal. He stood as Italy's

utter ruler. His last name was lost and replaced by 'Caesar II.' He was named Dictator.

"From mighty Rome, Caesar sent out linguists and anthropologists and ethnologists and psychologists and military men and others. In twenty years, twenty peaceful years, Italian had become the language of the world. A few minor uprisings in America and in Japan and were smashed. Julius Caesar II was World Dictator of the Republic of Earth. Someone in America denied him and was torn to pieces by the people. Someone in Italy spread literature of dissension and was hunted down and liquidated by Caesar's personal police, the Pretoriani. And so it went.

"Caesar adopted a prominent Air Force Colonel who became Caesar III on Lollabrigida's death. Each year on his birthday men were silent. No business was transacted. No one left his home. Except blue-and-silver clad soldiers, wearing PR armbands. Caesar's Pretoriani. No one *dared* venture out.

"During the reign of Caesar III, every person in the world changed his last name to an Italian one. The Ali bens and the Chicos and the Andres and the Fritzes and the Johns became Marianos and Roccos and Caldinis and Campisanos and diManos."

There was silence for a moment.

"The thing I can't understand," Jay mused, "is why in all these years there hasn't been a 'bad' Caesar, or an uprising."

"What do you mean by 'bad' Caesar?"

Jay shrugged. "In the first Pax Romana there was Caligula, who was insane. Nero, who preferred

artistic diversions to politics. There was Galba, who didn't know what was going on. And so on. And on and on. Your three dictators so far seem to have done excellent jobs. They seem to be damned conscientious leaders."

"When you re-create something," Ilaria told him, "you try to eliminate its faults."

"Of course. But what if Caesar's son or a Caesar's adopted son goes bad?" Jay elucidated.

"So far we haven't had that problem to deal with. But we're ready. Each time a new Dictator comes to power, one thousand top military men draw folded pieces of plastipaper from a 'bowl.' On twenty of these are X's. The others contain O's. The twenty X's are a secret organization, sworn to kill the Dictator if it should become necessary. When Caesar, as you say, 'goes bad'."

"Brilliant!" Jay breathed. "And he—Caesar—never knows who they are?"

"No one ever knows," Ilaria said. "Not even the members. They remain in contact, but none ever knows who the others are."

Jay remembered Ilaria's previous mention of the system, and the unconscious swelling of the Tribune's chest at the time. "You're one," he said.

Ilaria was caught off guard. "I—yes," he said. "I won't ask how you knew."

"A guess. Then you've been a—whatever it's called—for nine years, during Caesar V's reign."

"That's right."

"And you don't know any of the others?"

"Only one. I found out acciden-

tally. He—" Ilaria stopped.

Jay shrugged. "I won't ask any more questions along that line," he promised. "But I still can't believe there haven't been any uprisings!"

"None. Caesar II died of a heart attack. Caesar III had a brain tumor which we learned about too late. His son never had a chance to prove himself, other than that he was brave and foolish. He swam the Rubicon at its widest point, then walked to Rome in his shorts in the dead of winter. He died of pneumonia. Caesar V, our Dictator today, is strong and quiet. He holds the Empire firmly unified. But he does nothing extraordinary. And he is too lenient."

"I just can't conceive of such perfection!"

Kevin Ilaria smiled. He walked over to the window and peered out. "You couldn't. But this *is* the perfect government. Everyone is satisfied. One ruler. One capitol. One army. One language. One nationality. One world. One religion."

"I realize—" Jay halted. "One religion?" he demanded.

"Yes."

"What is it?" He found himself afraid of the answer. The indications were there, in plain sight. He guessed it before Kevin Ilaria turned from the window and said:

"Caesarism."

THE MAN called Gaius Julius Caesar Imperator V turned from the window and rubbed his hand over his graying hair.

"This is the first time I've ever run into anything of this sort."

The President of the Senate shrugged. He was an old man who

had been placed in the Senate by his father in 1980. So long ago that people wondered when he would die. They were tired of these old men dictating to their ruler, as many people before them had been tired. The rise of the President of the Senate to leadership of that revered group had not been meteoric by any means. But his maintenance of the position had been tenacious. He was a careful man.

The President of the Senate shrugged. "It is. It is the first time anything of this sort has ever come up, Julius. Therefore it is up to you to set an example."

Caesar glanced over at General Bonadella. The General nodded in agreement with Senator Chianti.

"This sort of business can break up the Empire if it's allowed to continue, Caesar," he said, in his pompous military way. "I say death."

Major DeCosta nodded quietly.

"Thumbs down all around, is it?" Caesar sat down behind his desk and picked up the speaker of his private cable to London. He looked at the three men.

"Commander in charge of Garrison C," he said.

There was a silent moment.

They looked up as Prefect Lamberti of the Pretorians, the Imperial personal bodyguard (it had progressed far beyond that. Its enrollment was tremendous; its power second only to the Dictator's) came in. The Senator nodded. The two field soldiers turned quickly away. The men of the field did not get along with the Pretorian dandies.

"Commander? This is the Dictator," Caesar said unnecessarily. The garrison commander knew

that only one person could call him on that line. The phone would react to no voice other than Caesar's.

"Have you the fellow who was preaching dissension? I say one year in prison. You heard me. Yes, one year. What? No! No torture!" He severed connections and looked up at his advisers.

Prefect Lamberti shook his head. Senator Chianti turned and stalked out. After a moment General Bonadella followed. The Major turned away to stare out the window. He shook his head.

"del Ponta? This is the Dictator," that quiet, flat voice said behind him. Caesar was calling the under-chief of the Pretoriani. "I will speak tomorrow from the balcony. Yes. 1400. Of course. World-wide. That's right. Oh, I suppose about a quarter 'til."

The man who ruled the world stood up and stared at Major DeCosta's back. At forty-one, Caesar was a gaunt man with stooped shoulders and sad lines running from his nostrils to the corners of his mouth. His forehead was lined and re-lined, and the keen brown eyes were dulled with years of decisions and hard work.

He was tired.

They called him the Hound because his face bore the same sad, quiet look worn by those dogs. And they called him weak because he let offenders off too easily.

DeCosta turned around. The young Major met his Chief's gaze.

"Well?" The voice of the Dictator was quiet and calm.

DeCosta's eyes flickered. He straightened militarily. He shrugged.

"It is not for me to say, Sir."

A slow smile spread over those weary features. "And you, Farouk?"

Lamberti stretched out his arm and balled his fist with the thumb extended and pointing down. "You know me, Caesar."

"I do. Even my best friend disagrees with my decisions now, after all these years of elbow-rubbing.

"You are usually more outspoken, Major DeCosta. Have you nothing more to say?"

DeCosta's reply was slow in coming but rapid in delivery. "I am around Caesar much of late," he rapped out. His back was stiff and military as he strode out of the Dictator's office.

Prefect Lamberti's gloved hand dropped to the butt of his gun, but Caesar shook his head in gentle negation.

Julius Caesar Imperator V gazed sadly at the closed door.

JAY HAD given up trying to reason with Ilaria about God. The man was intelligent as well as brilliant—there's a tremendous difference—about everything else, but he was stubbornly obstinate to Jay's arguments. At least in Jay's terminology he was stubbornly obstinate. All faith is stubborn obstinacy. Kevin Ilaria's faith was appalling. His arguments were beautiful. Flawless. Jay thought of his old friend, Father O'mare. Even that great psychologist-priest would be hard-put, he decided.

So he quit. He didn't give up. He just quit.

Can you tell a man the Earth's flat after he's been up in a jet?

Can you talk a bullet out of pursuing its path?

Can you reason with a Marxist?

"If a man can conquer the greatest enemy the world has ever faced, is he not God? If he can turn from killing and soldiering to soothing and pacifying, is he not God? If he can make the world one, after twenty-two centuries of 'world anarchism' is he not God? If he can maintain the peace and keep the people happy and heal all sores is he not God? If he just looks at you when you call him 'God' or 'Savior' and smiles and say 'I?' is he not God? If he chooses the perfect man to continue in his place, is he not God?"

"But that's proof! Why die? Isn't God immortal?"

"Only God could realize that one man can't continue to reign indefinitely. His ideas, yes. But he must create another to carry on his ideas. There must be variety and diversions."

Unshakeable. Unquestioning. Jay could never understand a person's sticking to the claim 'I'm a Christian' or 'I'm a Moslem' when he would be killed for it. Jay had always figured he'd have said to Nero's men 'Me? Me? A filthy Christian? Not I. I love Jupiter and Juno. Step inside and see my altars . . .'

Now he was seeing what sturdy, rock-firm martyr faith was like.

So he quit.

Instead he learned about the gyro-jet cars which hugged the roads like lovers on a honeymoon. He watched them sprout stubby wings and breathe flame and soar straight up. He learned about saying 'Open' to a lock and having the electronic device 'recognize' him and let him in. He learned about

personalphones which 'recognized' your voice. He learned about the tiny pellet of potassium cyanide and sulphuric acid with which the guns were loaded. The pellets struck and broke and the victim was dead in seconds. Very humane. No maimed or wounded. Just the dead.

He learned about self-shaping sandals—the most comfortable and most sensible shoes man had ever worn—and air baths and soft-voiced alarm clocks which politely told you it was time to get up and about unbreakable ring-finger chronos and about atomic heating and flawless plumbing and he saw plastic, plastic, plastic.

He learned about all of them. But his real delight was the depilatory cream. This, above all others, was man's greatest invention.

"No shaving . . . no silly damned socks or tight, hot shoes or tie . . . no battery stalling or flat tires . . . I guess this is paradise, Kevin!"

"And the perfect government and the perfect religion! All one race! One religion! One nation! One language! One nationality! One God!" Ilaria added exuberantly.

"That reminds me. How come I never see any coloreds?"

"Haven't you? By the way, no murderous car insurance or alimony laws, either. And no need for them. All marriages are ideal."

Jay was readily detoured to this new novelty.

"Now, don't let's go too far. Identical religion and race and customs and ideals and opinions may lower the divorce rate a lot, but there's still ye olde sex angle. A couple can go together twenty years and break up on the wedding

night. Some are hot and some are cold and some are slow and some are fast. The only thing you could have improved on, is sex education. It's astounding how many people of my time know nothing about the sexual part of marriage. The most important part!

"Of course it's doing what comes naturally; but what if two people have been taught from different viewpoints? Or if one hasn't been taught at all? Some people are actually ashamed or embarrassed. There are intelligent people who don't even know the biological facts! Few—especially women, know about the pleasure and the habit-forming angle. That's the one thing than can break up something beautiful in ten minutes.

"Education, maybe. Human nature, no."

"Whew!"

"Excuse me, Kevin, for launching into a Phillipic, but that's long been my pet peeve. Atrocious, deplorable, and all that."

"We don't *usually* tamper with human nature, Jay. As a rule, that is. This is going to come as a shock to you, with your silly, 'atrocious and deplorable' 1954 ideas and morals.

"A trial period. A pre-marital period of living together for a couple of weeks. If the couple isn't sexually suited, they either attempt to have it remedied by a physician or break off."

"A shock, yes," Jay murmured, slowly shaking his head. "How did it ever start? Anyone who'd propound an idea like that in my time would be accused of being some sort of perverted sex-fiend!

"A foolproof, flawless plan to in-

sure happy marriages!"

HALF ACROSS the world a door swung open and a tall dark man with piercing black eyes and a twin-tufted beard came in. His dark-green garment, faintly resembling a trench-coat, was double-breasted and belted and military cut. His feet were encased in plastileather boots which clicked as he came to attention before the desk.

The plate on the desk read "Praefectus Praetoriani."

"Major del Ponta, Sir."

The man behind the desk looked up. "At ease, Major."

Major Ali ben del Ponta relaxed and waited.

The man behind the desk finished scanning the sheet of micro-paper, marked something on it with a stylo, stuck it in the pneumatube on the corner of his desk, and pushed the button to close his desk drawer. He looked up at Major Ali bel del Ponta.

"Well?" He put his hands together, fingers touching.

"It has begun, Prefect Lamberti. All over the world our local men are leading their followers in attack. Captain Abram Mazzoli has sent in his report from Tel Aviv. The city is in his hands. Captain Mahomet DiSanto's 'Raiders' have complete control of the Sahara. Captain Arnaldi's forces are firmly entrenched in the old Washington area of America. He will move northward to meet Colonel Magnani's forces from Canada and Commander Campisano. They—"

"Campisano's airborne ready to roll?"

"Yes, Sir. Arrangements have been made. The drop will be just outside New York."

"Alright. Then everything has gone off as scheduled?"

"Yes, Sir."

Prefect Farouk Lamberti regarded his deskchron thoughtfully.

"And Caesar will make his speech in twenty-five hours and thirty-three minutes?"

Major del Ponta glanced at his own chron, which was strapped to the third finger of his left hand. "Yes, Sir. At 1400, tomorrow."

"Have the twenty-foot 'visor screen activated for public showing. Mount it outside as we'd planned."

"It's being taken care of, Sir. The screen is on its way to the Square. There will be a crowd."

"Good. We all want to hear noble Caesar."

Del Ponta grinned. "Yes, Sir. We all do. Especially tomorrow."

"He doesn't know?—or suspect?"

"He shouldn't Sir. Our men took over and began covering up at once. You know the atrocious condition of world communications systems. The Empire could fall and Rome might not hear of it for days."

"That's what I was counting on . . . that and the Disturber. The degeneracy of the field military is terrible. They are allowing themselves to get lazy and fat and careless."

"Yes, Sir."

"Have my car ready to drive to the Square behind Caesar's tomorrow. See that the covermen in the houses around the Square are doubled and double-checked. But when we go to the show, let's not have too great an exhibition of Imperial

power. We don't want this thing to backfire and cut our own throats."

"Yes, Sir." Del Ponta's grin widened.

"Dismissed."

Del Ponta came to attention, saluted and about-faced and left.

Prefect Lamberti opened his desk drawer and took out his old service pistol. It was a gamma gun. He had not released any of the deadly, slow-acting rays from its chamber in seven years. But it was ready.

He opened another drawer and took out a white cloak, marked across the back with a blue dove and the single word 'Liberacione.'

He checked the pistol.

DOES THE Emissary from 1954 get to meet Caesar?" Jay wanted to know.

"Later. He's to make a speech tomorrow afternoon. It will be world-televised."

"He looks very old and very tired," Jay ventured. He'd seen Caesar on transcriptions of old speeches and on old newsreels.

"He's about . . . forty, I think. Somewhat weak. Very lenient."

"I would've guessed him to be a good deal older." Then "Why weak? Because he's lenient?"

Ilaria smiled. "Remember, Jay, 'Pax per Bello.' Too much leniency leads one's subjects to be bold. Over-bold."

"One man's opinion?"

The Tribune shrugged. "No. Caesar doesn't get along with his advisors too well. They criticize him for being too ready to forgive and forget."

The more Jay saw of this per-

fect world, the more he realized how cruel and hard people must be to maintain a paradise. If everyone is to be happy, someone must be unhappy.

The trouble is, people don't like to be told "This is for your own good."

Jay said so.

"But if they're sat on hard enough," Ilaria rebutted, "They don't have a chance ever to try anything else which they might *think* is for their own good . . ."

Jay nodded. Very true. As Ilaria left the room Jay went to the window and looked out at the Louisville of 2054. For the millionth time in the seven days he'd been here, he wished he had a cigarette. They had been outlawed as detrimental to health long ago.

The fact that it had been seven days reminded him of something else left behind.

Julie.

"You're a fool," he finally told himself. No wonder Julie'd been on edge and acting what he termed 'odd' lately! She was scared. He'd been out of school three and a half years. He was twenty-five. He'd just bought a new Olds. He'd begun buying his clothes at *The Store* rather than a store. Hell, he should've been married long ago. His days here were full. There were meetings with scientists and historians and militarists and linguists and everyone else Kevin could think up. He talked and listened and discussed and lectured. But he thought of her every night. Every morning before he rose. At times like this, when he was alone for a few minutes.

Of course it was love! He'd al-

ways thought too many people threw the word around too much. He'd always been afraid to use it because he wasn't sure of its meaning. He's used it once. And he'd been kicked in the teeth by the girl. He hadn't used it since.

When was a guy ever sure?

Hogwash! Now he knew that each man forms his own definition. True, too many people used the word love indiscriminately. It's mistreated. Kicked around. Assumed and taken off. Dragged through messes and scandals and law courts and through the mud. But to a man like Jay Welch, to a man who has been afraid—yes, afraid—to use it, it *must* be there when he begins thinking in those terms.

Love. He'd had to come across one-hundred years to realize he'd found its meaning. To realize he'd known its meaning a long time. To realize that love is whatever you make it, what you, yourself, call it. You define it yourself. Then you apply it.

It had been there all the time. You don't include someone in everything you do and everything you think without it. You don't try to change her and yourself. To make her perfect. To make yourself perfect with—and for—her without it. This business about "accepting" little faults—as well as big ones—, he decided, is for the birds. It's human nature to translate other people in terms of yourself and try to change them in terms of yourself. To argue and be proud and hate like hell to have to make up. But you don't make a project of it with everyone. Not unless . . .

He and Julie had a lot to talk about.

Then he remembered where he was and when he was. He thought of Doctor Schink. And suddenly he was scared. He remembered what Ilaria had said about Schink. 'He's there for good . . .'

"He's never said a word about my going back!"

"Neither have you," came Ilaria's voice, and Jay whirled around to see the big psychologist coming through the door.

"We'd like to keep you here as long as possible. But not against your wishes, of course. You were shanghaied, not kidnaped." The left corner of his wide mouth pulled back in that slow, reassuring smile.

"I stand chastised. Now I've thought of it, though, I can hardly wait."

"The day after tomorrow? I want you to hear Caesar speak. Then I want to talk a good deal more."

"Early, the day after tomorrow." Then, little-boyishly, Jay hurriedly added a couple of reasons. "I'm getting tired of talking and being questioned. I feel like a talking animal in the zoo."

Ilaria nodded, smiling. "Julie?"

"I figured it would occur to you sooner or later. Just because you think a little more deeply and carefully than most men of your time doesn't make you immune to love. That belongs to *all* times. Good luck and a lot of children."

Jay grinned. He'd met Ilaria's wife and five of his six children the night before. He turned to look out the window once more.

Beautiful. The elevated streets, with gyro-cars hurtling along . . . the sky full of more winged gyros

and planes . . . the streets below full of happy, white-faced, white-clad people . . .

White-faced!

"Kevin, you avoided my question the day before yesterday. I've been almost afraid to ask you again. Why no Negroes?"

"It will be hard for you to accept, with your antiquated democratic ideas." Ilaria breathed a deep sigh. "Certain elements of dissension and unrest, Jay, are better eliminated. Coloreds have always bred both. People are just like that. Whites and yellows and tans and reds can get along, but not blacks."

Jay had gotten along with them all his life. "In ancient Rome there were slaves . . ." he said, trying to understand.

"Not in this Rome. I said, better eliminated, Jay." Ilaria went to the window and looked down at the scene below. He explained:

"We exterminated them."

A hammer crashed down. A door slammed. A glass shattered. A siren screeched. A punch caught Jay in the solar plexus. Jay had experienced all these. Ilaria's flat statement was worse.

"Exter—No! Oh, No!" He swung around to face the big psychologist. Ilaria's usual smile was gone. He looked solemn and very grim.

"You weren't ready for it. I don't think we can discuss it. Just remember this: When you've a bunch of dogs and they all get along with one another except one, you don't leave them together and you don't try to keep them separated by a chicken-wire fence. It's too unpleasant. You get rid of the troublemaker."

DURING the night the rebel forces moved out of Tel Aviv and took over Israel. They captured the entire devastated Washington area, a series of ten cities ringing Rome, and hundreds of other key spots. The world's largest airbase at Madrid, Spain, was taken. Forces sent to the aid of the base defenders were met by an onslaught of their own planes. The troops didn't have a chance.

Dr. Montmorency Trumperi's Wave Disturber had been outlawed in 2001. The plans were carefully filed away and the machine's component parts junked. But the Disturber suddenly reappeared on the night of June 9, 2054, and world communications were stopped. Lamberti's scientists had come up with a counter-radio mechanism, of course, so that the Rebels were able to maintain contacts.

Louisville was not attacked. Lamberti and his men knew about the emissary from the past sheltered there, and informed their fifth columnists at Standiford they wanted both the Man From 1954 and Tribune Kevin Ilaria alive.

New York was attacked by land and air. Tokyo fell. Everywhere white flags with the blue Liberacione and the picture of a dove fluttered above smoking battlegrounds. Everywhere men were on the march.

When Tribune Kevin Ilaria stormed in twelve hours later, Jay noticed his friend was wearing his gun again. The cyanide pistol had not swung at his hip since the day of Jay's arrival. He was also surprised to note that Ilaria wore boots and carried a steel helmet

under his arm.

There was a new quality in his voice. Brittle, static. The soft tones of the psychologist were gone.

Jay realized that this was Tribune Ilaria of the Forces, not Dr. Ilaria the psychologist.

"You sure you want to leave here tomorrow?" he demanded curtly.

Instantly Jay was on the defence. "I am," he said coldly.

Ilaria's smile looked forced. "I've been authorized to offer you a Sub-Tribunate in the Forces."

"What?"

"You've had experience. None of us have. You've been in actual combat, in the Air Force."

"Why? I don't—"

"War," Ilaria said simply. "Rebellion."

Jay stared at him. He couldn't think of anything to say.

Ilaria turned away. "Paradise. The Iron Hand. One religion and one language and all that. Utterly cock-sure. But . . . we were wrong. They've been getting ready. Training and planning. Collecting men and arms. They began even before the empire was established." —Jay noticed he said empire rather than republic— "All this time they've been preparing and planning and . . . waiting."

Jay was dumbfounded. "How big is it?"

Kevin Ilaria spread his hands. "Big enough. Their attack seems to have been simultaneous all over the world. Something like commando or guerrilla tactics. Quick, quiet attacks on a small scale."

He told Jay about the Tel Aviv incident and about Captain Spagnoletti and a half-track disappearing in the rubble in the Washing-

ton area and about intercontinental communication being shut off.

"Bomb 'em out," Jay said, without thinking.

"You don't bomb out fifth columnists, Jay.

"Last night they captured London and Tokyo and two-thirds of New York and they captured Lollabrigida airbase in Madrid. They're wearing PR uniforms and some kind of new uniform they've dreamed up. Most of them aren't even uniformed. It's a hell of a mess."

"How long do you think it'll take to quell the thing?"

"I have no idea. I'm to take command at Standiford Field. Rinaldi solved the saboteur problem . . . it was Colonel Di Orio. Rinaldi and some of his boys caught the Colonel and a few of *his* men in the Radio Room on the special 'Liberacione' wave length."

"In irons?" Jay wanted to know.

"No. They put up a fight. They were killed."

"You're flying?"

"Doubt it. I'll be one of those behind-the-scenes men. Supposed to be valuable. Only in a mess like this you can't tell what's behind the scenes and what's front line. They're liable to start on Louisville next."

Ilaria hitched self-consciously at his gun-belt. He twisted his helmet around a couple of times before he set it gingerly on his head. He turned and opened the door and went out. His head came back in and said:

"I'm not sure it's the sort of thing you quell, Jay."

"Kevin! Wait! What'm I supposed to—"

He was gone.

Jay thought only a moment. Then he switched on the phone. At least intercom systems were still in operation. The clerk at the desk upstairs looked at him from the screen.

"This is the Man From 1954," Jay said, using the name by which everyone called him. "Stop Tribune Ilaria as he goes out."

In an instant Kevin's head appeared.

"I'll go with you. Shall I get my uniform before we go to Standiford or after?"

Ilaria grinned. "After," he said. "Grab the elevator and come on up."

This isn't your fight, Jay Welch, a voice told him as he opened the door. You don't even belong here, Jay Welch, the voice told him as he ran out into the hall. You're crazy to go to bat for these monsters, Jay Welch, the voice told him as he pushed the elevator button. You fought before for a bunch of people who didn't appreciate it one damned bit, Jay Welch. Remember about the Iron Hand and the Negroes, the voice told him as the doors opened and he stepped in. Remember you were shanghaied, it said, as the car shot upward and the bottom of his stomach felt as if it had been left behind. Remember you were going back to Duo Point and Herman's and Joe Scaccia's restaurant and Julie and tie and suit and Julie and the tight shoes and Julie and personal freedom and Julie and Jerry, the black guy you worked with and liked so well and Julie and the new Olds and Julie. Tomorrow you were going back.

The doors shot back. He stepped out on the roof.

"Mister Welcci?" said the clerk. "That's Tribune Ilaria's plane over there."

He pointed to the little PR ship marked with the three silver diamonds of a Tribune and the staff of psychology. Jay ran. Wind was whipping across the roof and their cloaks streamed out and fluttered. The three men came together.

"This is Commander DeVito, Jay. Commander, Jay Welch, The Man From 1954." The way Ilaria said it always made it sound capitalized.

They shook hands. They got into the plane and shot straight up and the city was a blur beneath them. In less than a minute the little flier dropped down faster than any elevator and landed at Standiford.

"Sergeant, Sub-Tribune Welcci needs a uniform. A—"

"Forty long," Jay suggested, then colored. Tunic and a hundred years made a difference in his size. He went with the supply-sergeant, who gave him a correct fit the first time—times *have* changed, Jay grunted—and fitted him with a helmet on the second try. He felt a tremor as he buckled on the pellet gun. With the cloak flapping about his heels and the gun banging his leg and the helmet biting his ear he ran to the elevator and down to the room Kevin had designated. The Tribune and Commander DeVito and five or six other officers were standing around a table in the steel-walled underground room.

Before them was a gigantic map. They looked up as Jay burst in.

"This is The Man From 1954," Ilaria said. There were hand-shakes

all around that reminded Jay of fraternity rush. DeVito and one of the others wore wings. Jay wondered if that were still a pilot's insignia.

The red X's on the map, they told him, were places under attack. The blue ones were areas taken by the fast-moving rebels. He learned that the messenger-jet they'd sent to Rome—they were lost without their instantaneous push-button communications system—hadn't made it. More had been sent. Meanwhile they were on their own.

The nearest major battle was at Chicago, where Cocuzzi Flight Base was located. Ilaria despatched Commander DeVito and something like fifty jet fighters to Chicago. The other man was in charge of a group of B-90 Stratosonic bombers. They lifted their fists in stiff-armed salute and left.

"The rest of the ships will remain here, ready for instant take-off. I'll command interception. Sub-Tribune Rinaldi will command the base in case I have to go up.

"I can't understand why we haven't been jumped yet. We must assume they'll attack Louisville because of Standiford and the Time Building. They'll also be interested in you, Jay."

BY 2:00 THAT afternoon Louisville had not yet been attacked. Abruptly at 1:59 world communications went into operation. Everyone turned on his television set, wondering if Caesar's talk would go on as scheduled.

It did. There was a screaming

crowd before the Capitol. On the high balcony stood the Dictator. At his side stood Senator Chianti and around them were ringed Caesar's Pretorian Guards. The city was nearly empty of field soldiers. They had gone out to meet the insurgents.

"People of the Republic of Rome." The noise subsided as Caesar raised his hands and spoke.

"You have all heard of the revolt now in progress against us throughout the Empire."

Ilaria nodded at the Caesar's psychologically clever use of the word us.

"With your aid, my people, we can put a quick end to this treason. You have seen better than half a century of peaceful, successful government. These traitors and conspirators would attempt to overthrow our government and put an end to this peace . . . this Peace of Rome.

"The world is now in a state of emergency. If you, my people, will bear with me through this period of crisis we will return to our world of peace and serenity once more."

Cheers. Wild applause.

"They believe him," Jay murmured.

Ilaria looked at him. "Of course," he said.

"For a long time our Empire has remained . . ."

Caesar's face stiffened. The deep-set, weary eyes blazed and widened. His hand reached out for the railing. Then he stiffened again and was limp as the bursting pellet of sulphuric acid and potassium cyanide took effect.

Caius Julius Caesar Imperator V fell.

There was uproar and clamor and shrieking.

Jay and Ilaria stood, staring, as the Pretorian Guards levelled their guns and became a solid, surrounding wall. The T-V cameramen were getting the scene of the century.

"Lamberti!" Ilaria bit out.

The Pretorian Prefect, his hands outspread, stood on the balcony over Caesar's body. The white cloak with Liberacione on it fluttered about him. A couple of Pretorians came out with an amplifier.

"Friends, Romans, Countrymen," said Farouk Lamberti.

"—every available long-range ship to Rome," Ilaria's brittle voice was hacking out orders. "Every one. Contact every other base while communications are still working!"

". . . a noble man. But not the man to govern Earth. No, not he nor his government. I bring you a new government. I, Farouk Lamberti, long his best friend, have done this not to him, but for him. For you. The Earth was not meant to be governed by a system of—"

"Yes, I said bomb Rome."

Sub-Tribune Rinaldi smiled. "But Kevin, my friend, we can't bomb Lamberti just when he's getting a good start."

Jay looked up. Kevin Ilaria spun around. "What?"

"Never trust old friends, Kevin. Colonel Di Orio didn't. He surprised us in the Radio Room and we were forced to put him out of the way. Also remember this: all members of the Liberacione carry gamma pistols."

Rinaldi pulled out his gamma gun and shot Ilaria through the middle.

Jay was horrified. He forgot where he was and when he was and what he was doing. All he knew was that there was a cyanide gun at his hip and that this man had shot Ilaria. His gun came up and sputtered.

The pellet caught Rinaldi just under the chin and burst. Rinaldi collapsed.

"Had a—gamma gun—not . . . deadly. Slow-acting . . . radio-activity. Hardly . . . burned me. Come on—we've got to . . . get back to the—Time building."

"Oh, no we won't. You're hurt. We—"

"Don't argue. Sergeant! Saaarguunt!" Ilaria gasped at the exertion of shouting. The Centurion ran in.

"We've got to—get to the—Time building."

"Rinaldi shot the Tribune. Rinaldi was a traitor," Jay explained rapidly.

Ilaria's gun clicked and the Centurion shuddered back and fell through the door. The gamma burst from his pistol hit the wall.

"God! Is everyone a traitor?" Jay demanded of the Universe.

PEOPLE ARE easily swayed. It didn't take them long to espouse the new cause. They were helped along in their decision by the Libera-
cione planes hovering overhead with loads of KCN-H₂SO₄ bombs. The whispering campaign Lamberti had carefully started about germ warfare helped, too. Those who didn't switch over rapidly were jumped by the new forces. Tribune Ilaria in Louisville, Kentucky, in America held out as long

as he could. Then the bombers came. And the Tribune fled to the Time building.

The building shook. A table shivered and a lamp shattered. A jet fighter flew close by the window and the Centurion watched fearfully as it flipped on one delta wing and fired a tracer burst into a PR ship. The defender exploded in mid-air.

Ilaria looked twenty years older than the man who had smiled and welcomed Jay Welch to 2054. He and a young scientist were preparing the machine to send the man from 1954 back to his own time.

"You'll have to leave the gun here, Jay." Ilaria winced as he bent over a set of dials.

"I'd like to keep the uniform."

"All right. Does that do it, Doctor?"

The scientist nodded. He looked at Jay. "It's ready," he said.

"This switch sets everything in motion, doesn't it?" Ilaria asked.

"Yes. That's the final control."

"Then . . . I'll do it. I'd like . . . to say something to Jay before he leaves."

The scientist hesitated a moment, then shrugged and left. The Centurion went to the door. He was a young man and fanatically loyal.

"You all right, Tribune?"

Ilaria smiled. "I'm . . . all right, Sergeant."

The Centurion nodded and left.

"Sit . . . sit down in that chair, Jay, and do your best to relax."

Jay sat down. A bomber roared overhead. There was a blast nearby.

"What will you do now, Kevin?"

Ilaria shrugged. "Fight 'em 'til they come in and we're sunk. Then

(Continued on page 104)

It was a ghostly, million-years old derelict floating out there in space, and Winson meant to capture it for Earth. Perhaps it is fortunate that he did, and perhaps archeologists will someday decipher those strange symbols on the control board . . .

ELLIPTIC ORBIT

BY POUL ANDERSON

THE DETECTOR'S quick buzz pulled Winson from sleep like a reaching hand. He stirred, kicking off the lanyard that held him in place against air currents; a push of one hand sent him across the tiny pilot room to the instrument board.

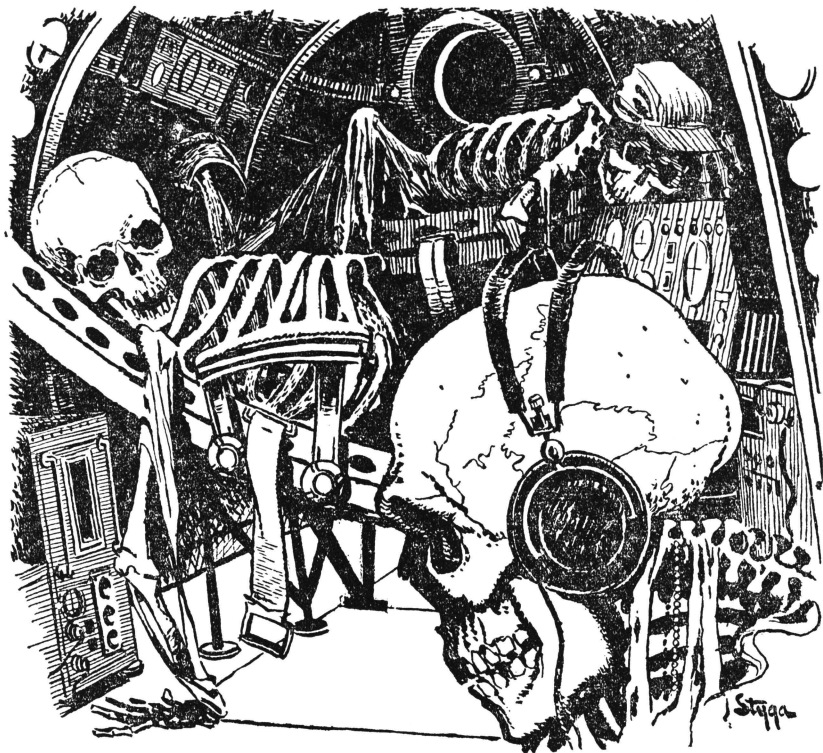
Lights flashed there, less bright than the stars whose cruel brilliance filled the vision ports. Winson studied his meters, frowning with concentration as his fingers moved over the keyboard of the boat's computer. Yes—that was the object.

The observatory on Europa had given a rough orbit for it as it swung inward past Jupiter, and had taken photographs. The pictures weren't very clear, but they did reveal a shininess and regularity of

shape that didn't belong to a meteor. It was worth checking on, and Winson had been glad to volunteer for the job. If the thing turned out to have a lot of silver or uranium, he would get a number of prestige units back on Earth for the news: there was a chronic shortage of industrial metals at home.

His radarscope told him that the object was several thousand miles off, moving nearly parallel to his own course. When he had the orbit accurately enough, he strapped himself into the control seat and applied a short blast. The new vector ought to bring him just about up to his goal.

Briefly, the boat surged and roared around him, then there was again an elemental stillness. Win-



Illustrated by John Styga

son grew aware of his heartbeat and the dim hiss of the ventilators. He relaxed with the patience of many years in space, and pondered the curious fact that the orbit was not hyperbolic after all.

The thing grew so slowly on his vision that he wasn't sure just when the tremendous knowledge was born within him. But at the last, he sat shaking.

It was no meteor. It was a spaceship.

Cold and dark, the long shape spun inward toward the tiny sun. It looked primitive, somehow, despite the clean torpedo outline;

maybe it was the outsize rocket tubes which gave him that impression. In any event—it was no ship of Earth or Venus.

Winson's eyes went back to the gigantic sprawl of the constellations. How far to the nearest of those coldly flaring suns—?

In the awe of that moment, he hardly remembered that this discovery meant enough units to upgrade him a whole class.

Something else caught his eyes, a thin blue-streak across the darkness. Jets! Who the devil was out here besides himself? He swung the radarscope about, its probing fin-

gers groped and information shivered back along them. He gave the figures to the computer, and found that the other spaceship was also converging on the new object.

New object? No. Old—incredibly old.

Pushing speculation aside, Winson concentrated on guiding his own vessel in the last delicate maneuvers. There was a faint shock as his hull touched the stranger's. Magnetronic grapples clanked into place, and there was a twisting while the two ships' spins equalized. Then he was again falling free, the rotation wasn't enough to give appreciable weight; it was like an endless tumbling into infinity.

Kicking loose from the seat, he soared across to the locker and broke out his spacesuit. The oncoming third craft wouldn't be here for a good hour yet, and the eagerness that blazed within Winson could not wait.

Emerging from his airlock, he stepped gingerly across to the other hull and felt his bootsoles grab hold. The strange ship was considerably bigger than his own, a gloomy curve whose slow turning spun the stars around his field of view. Even as he stood there, the amber disc of Jupiter rose into sight.

It was very quiet here.

Shuffling around the hull, always careful to keep one bootsole clutching it, Winson hunted for an entrance. The shrunken sun came harshly into his sky, spilling heatless light across the metal. He noticed that there was a fine layer of dust. How many millions of years had it taken to accumulate so much from the near-vacuum of

space?

The airlock was close to the bows, and there was a handle with which to open it. Winson turned this, experimentally, and the outer valve swung wide—stiffly, its lubricating fluid long gone. Blackness gaped within.

Winson hesitated before trying the inner valve. No telling what—Shrugging, he pushed, and it opened, protestingly, for him: inward, which meant that internal air pressure would have held it shut. But all the air within must have leaked out eons ago. This was a dead ship.

The stars at his back were a comforting sight in the hollow darkness around him. He flashed his light in all directions. Undiffused, it gave merely a puddle of radiance where it fell. Metal shone at him. He was in some kind of antechamber, with lockers to right and left. Opening one, he saw a racked spacesuit. It was incomplete, the plastic helmet and gaskets must have crumbled away under the million-year blast of cosmic rays, but the alloys were still there.

The suit wasn't Earthling or Venusian. It was too tall and thin.

Winson floated slowly inward. Beyond the chamber, he found a crowded room where six—acceleration bunks?—had been. There were skeletons in four of them. Not much else remained: a few blackened fragments which might be mummified hair or flesh, some buckles and other metallic objects. He shivered.

Abaft the bunkroom he saw what must have been control gyroscopes and the central air plant; beyond that, there was a doorless barrier

and a panel of meters and switches. He theorized that the engines lay behind this, remote-controlled to avoid radiation. So—a primitive fission pile. Apparently the builders had known nothing of force screens to make their nuclear devices safe.

“Below” this level was a hold which seemed to be nearly empty. In the bows he found the pilot room. It was also crude, too many instruments, nothing like the simplicity of his own boat; in an alien fashion, this craft was like the first to leave Earth, five hundred years ago. Two skeletons hung loosely together in crumpled chairs.

So you died at your posts, thought Winson with a great gentleness. He looked into the eyeless face of one skull; it was utterly strange, but he thought that the spirit which had lived there would not be altogether foreign to him.

The meter faces were blank: cosmic rays had flaked away the paint through ages. But etched into the control board was a row of symbols. Winson unclipped his fluorescent pencil and copied them onto the arm of his spacesuit, just for luck.

He grew suddenly aware that time had passed. The third ship must be getting close. Better have a look.

When he emerged on the outside hull, he could see the approaching vessel clearly. It was an ugly shock. Those squat lines could only be—Venusian.

He switched on his helmet radio. It should carry the few miles to the newcomer. “Hello, there,” he said, trying to keep his voice level. “Hello, Venusian. Can you hear

me? Come in.”

The hoarse, grating tones flashed back: “Hello, Earthling. Identify yourself!”

“Wait a minute.” Anger bristled in Winson. “I’m here, and this ship is terrestrial property by right of discovery. What are you doing? Who are you?”

“You may have heard my name: Raus Chanthar of Gorklucky.”

Winson felt a shock of dismay. Yes—he knew that name, Venus’ ace politico-military agent in her long-drawn rivalry with Earth for the mastery of space. Somehow Chanthar’s spies had learned of the new arrival too, and it was important enough for the creature himself to come out here.

“We seem to have a visitor from Outside,” went on Chanthar, conversationally. The ion-blast of his tubes flashed again, edging him closer. “What happened? Do they have the legendary faster-than-light drive, or did they just exceed escape velocity for their solar system and drift here?” After a moment, thoughtfully: “Yes, it must be the latter. It wouldn’t be a derelict otherwise. But they may have something of value aboard—”

“I’m warning you,” said Winson, “stay away! This is Earth property.”

“It won’t be for long,” said Chanthar with a hint of amusement. The wan sunlight gleamed off the gun turrets of his craft. Winson’s boat had only a thin needle beam.

There was death here. Winson’s mind raced with an unnatural speed.

They assume, as the observatory on Europa did, that this ship has

a hyperbolic orbit. I've taken closer checks, and I know it's elliptical. If I can use that fact—

"Yes," he said aloud. "They do seem to have a lot of new stuff here. Some of it may be—tremendous."

"So?" Winson could imagine the reptile monster's ridged forehead scowling with thought. *Why is he telling me this?*

"I've reactivated the engines. It wasn't hard to do, and there's still fuel in her. Rather than let you have what's here, Chanthar, I'm prepared to destroy the whole works. I can plunge her toward the sun, and she's got too much mass for your clunk to pull free. Nor could you summon adequate help in time."

There was a long and enormous quiet. The stars burned impersonally around them, and Winson waited. His own sweat was rank in his nostrils.

"I could shell her to destruction," said Chanthar at last.

"If you want to waste shells," replied the Earthling. "The sun will destroy her anyway."

"It's not a pleasant way for you to die," said Chanthar. "Can't we make a bargain?"

"I trust you?"

"I offer you your freedom, both from death and from going to a Venusian prison. I'll give you my word as a Controller. That's inviolable."

True enough, especially with Chanthar's crew as witnesses. Winson drew a shuddering breath.

"—So I talked him into letting me get away in my own boat," finished Winson. "He figured I'd merely report I hadn't been able

to find the object; he knew my one beam couldn't damage the stranger. I blasted clear, then swung back. By that time he'd grappled. My beam *was* enough to wreck his ship's jets. Then I hurried to Europa."

He looked out the window. A cool breeze touched his face, and sunlight was warm on rustling trees. It was good to be upgraded two whole ranks, but it was better to be home again on Earth.

The astronomer, Dall, grinned. "And of course you'd given him the impression the ship could still be operated, and that it held super-scientific gadgets. Neither of those ideas being anywhere near the truth! Good work." He leaned back in his chair. "Our navy picked them up right on the orbit you'd given. It's going to be a real advantage to us to have Raush Chanthar safely locked away. The ship herself, of course, will only be of archeological interest."

"Archeology," wondered Winson. "Just what have you been able to find out from her orbit?"

"Not much," said Dall. "As you realized, an elliptical orbit meant that she was part of the Solar System, had with high probability always been part of it; the chance of the sun's actually capturing an object from interstellar space is very small indeed. Therefore she came from one of our planets and would not be likely to hold any technological secrets, so you could afford to gamble with her for your life. But which planet she started from will probably never be known."

"Couldn't your computer trace the orbit back?"

"Only up to a point. It was an enormous ellipse, you know: semi-major axis more than half a light-year. Too many uncertainties creep in. It seems probable, though, that she left some world of ours and either ran into trouble or—maybe something happened to her home civilization and she had no place to go and just drifted around till the crew starved to death." Dall frowned. "Exactly what world it was, will never be known, I imagine. In fact, the computer gives a result which looks impossible. Say's she's probably been out in space for more than two billion years."

Winson felt an eerie crawling along his spine. Doubly a ghost—"Why," he breathed, "that's longer than life itself has existed on Earth

or Venus or any known planet!"

"Exactly. A real paradox, this. The ship is too crude to have been built by interstellar explorers visiting our system long ago, and yet she *couldn't* have come from some prehistoric culture on our own home because there was only sterile rock here when she was built!"

Winson rubbed his chin. "There were symbols carved," he murmured. "A message? I don't know. We'll never know. But they looked like this—"

He went over to the blackboard. With one hand he rubbed it clean of figures while his other fumbled for a piece of chalk, located it and drew the unreadable shapes there:

MADE IN U.S.A.

• • •

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933, AND JULY 2, 1946 (39 U. S. C. 233)

Of *If*, published monthly at Buffalo, New York, for September 1, 1954.

1. The names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: *Publisher*, Quinn Publishing Company, Inc., 17 Pearl Street, Kingston, N. Y.; *Editor*, James L. Quinn, 17 Pearl Street, Kingston, N. Y.; *Managing editor*, None; *Business manager*, None.

2. The owner is: (if owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of stock.) Quinn Publishing Company, Inc., 17 Pearl Street, Kingston, N. Y.; James L. Quinn, 17 Pearl Street, Kingston, New York.

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James L. Quinn, *Editor*.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 15th day of June, 1954.

(SEAL)

Charles H. Gaffney (My commission expires March 30, 1956)

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP

COMMUNITY PROPERTY

*The first successful non-Terrestrial divorce case! Fame for
Legal Eagle Jose Obanion for his generalship of
a three-sexed, five Venusian history-shattering precedent!
Habits are habits but—alas!—on Venus they differ . . .*

BY ALFRED COPPEL

ONE OF these days an embittered lawyer is going to write a text on the effects of spaceflight on the divorce laws. This writer will be a Terrie, about five ten, with blue eyes, black hair—turning grey very fast, and the unlikely name of Jose Weinberg Obanion III. Me.

I remember very well the day I was graduated from law school; the day my father gave me his version of the Obanion credo. *Allways remember you live in a community property state—*

That simple phrase has kept three generations of Obanions in the divorce trade. And only I have had cause to regret it.

Basically, I suppose, my troubles began the day the Subversive Party swept the Joe Macs out of Con-

gress and repealed the Alien Restriction Act of 1998. That bit of log-rolling gave the franchise to almost all resident aliens and resulted in a situation virtually destroying the sanctity of divorce as an institution.

I'm a Joe Mac myself—politically, I mean. Obanions have been voting the Joe Mac Party Ticket for more than a hundred years. Red is our color. There are even family legends that say an Obanion was with the first Joe Mac when he became President of that old unit the Euse of Aay.

We have to rely on legends, unfortunately, because the Joe Mac Party traditionally fed their rally bonfires with books, and when they won the election and took over the



Euse of Aay they had a rally to end all rallies and somehow the Government Archives—books, you see, as well as punch cards and the like—got taken over by some very zealous Party men. The records were always rather incomplete after that. Only word of mouth information was available during that first Joe Mac Administration, and that can be sketchy. For example, the party color is red. All we know is that first Joe Macs had something to do with red. You see how it goes.

What I mean by all this, is that I can see the faults in my own Party. I'm no diehard. Nor am I a bad loser. The Subs won control of Congress by a landslide, so I guess the people wanted that sort of slipshod government. Only they should have been more careful, dammit, when they started tampering with the laws.

I'm not antispacegook, either. I have my framed Legal Eagle's Oath right over my desk and I live up to it. And if Congress sees fit to make any Tmm, Dccck, or Harry a citizen of our great Commonwealth—I account it my duty to see to it that they are not denied the benefits of our Terrestrial divorce laws.

But sometimes it can be *very* trying.

The new Sub Administration and their rash repeal of Joe Mac laws has had the effect of putting reverse English on the Obanion credo.

Always remember you live in a community property state . . .

That wonderful phrase that encompasses so many great truths—that ringing statement that has

made me rich and kept me a bachelor—now means something else. Confusion. Work. Yes, and even spacegook depravity.

I SHOULD go back and pick up the story at the beginning before I get too upset.

My name, as I said before, is Jose Obanion. I'm a licensed Legal Eagle, specializing in divorce law—and doing well at it. I have a good office on the 150th floor of the Needle Building, a damned fine address and a comfortable layout, too. A whole room to myself, a private visor service to the Municipal Law Library, and a lap-desk for my secretary, Thais Orlof.

On the day it began I was walking to work from the tubeway station and feeling rather pleased with myself. My income was high and steady, my protein ration account was in good shape and I was doing my bit as a civilized Terrestrial.

The morning was remarkably clear. You could make out the disc of the sun quite nicely through the smog, and there was a smogbow gleaming with carbon particles in the sky. I felt alert, expectant. Something **BIG** was going to happen to me. I could feel it.

Even in the go-to-work press of people on Montgomery Street, I didn't get shocked once. That's the way my luck was running. And three characters brushed against me and got nipped by my new Keep-A-Way.

There's been talk about making Keep-A-Ways illegal. Just the sort of infringement on personal liberty the Subversives are famous for. In-

consistent, too. They pass laws letting every spacegook in the universe come here to live and then talk about taking away one of the things that makes the crowding bearable.

I made a point of arriving at the office a little early, hoping to catch Thais in the act of coming in late. My secretary was a hard girl to dock, but I never stopped trying. It was a game we played. If she came in late, I would be justified in docking a protein credit off her pay for every thirty seconds of office time she wasted. So far I had managed to keep her pay low enough so she couldn't think of leaving my employ—though she was earning a few prots on the side by acting as correspondent in divorce cases that couldn't be settled by Collusion Court and actually had to be tried before a judge and jury.

Thais and I were still haggling over the price of her services as part-time mistress, too. I couldn't see giving her her asking price, which was half again the regular market price. Thais knew the value of a prot, all right. And of an erg, too. "Take care of the ergs," she would say, looking at me meaningfully, "and the prots will take care of themselves." Thais was a devout Ben Franklinist and she was full of aphorisms like that.

I settled myself into my Lowfer and glanced over the desk calendar. A full, profitable day ahead. Tremmy Jessup and his new fiancée were coming in at 0900 to sign the premarital divorce settlement. A wise couple, I thought approvingly. Save a lot of trouble later. At 1100 Truncott vs Truncott and

Truncott. A multiple divorce case with two women involved. Very lucrative sort of case. And then at 1200 Gleda Warick was coming in to have me validate her Interlocutory decree. A formality. But I hoped to take her to lunch at the Palace where they were advertising a five ounce portion of genuine horsemeat on their five prot dinner. That sort of thing would impress Gleda and I rather hoped for great things from her. Not only that, she was spending 25,000 prots yearly on divorces. No Franklinist, she.

It still lacked a minute to the hour so I switched on the TV to catch Honest Pancho's commercial. Pancho was my most active competitor and he cost me plenty, but I couldn't suppress a grudging admiration of his enterprise. He had Lyra Yves doing his stuff for him, and anyone as socko as Lyra was dangerous. Sweetheart of the Western Hemisphere is the way she was billed, and her agent wasn't exaggerating too much.

Lyra was singing his come-on backed by a quartet humming a steady whap rhythm and doing a slow twitch. The lights were playing her daring costume big, accenting the fact that she had one breast almost covered. I frowned. How come the League of Decency let her get away with anything as suggestive as an opaque breast covering. Pancho must have friends in the censor's office. It was just another sign of the increasing degeneracy of our times. Soon entertainers would be appearing clothed from head to foot, exploiting the erotic stimulation of imagination.

“—whap me slap me baby doll,” Lyra was singing. “Beat my head against the wall—lover, I don’t care at all at all—*Whap!* Honest Pancho’s on the ball!”

Now the announcer cut in with his insinuating voice explaining how you could get your divorces quicker, cheaper and twice as funny at Honest Pancho’s Big Spltzmart in the Flatiron Building, as well as his Legal Eaglery just down from the County Courthouse. “—yes, friends—TWO big locations to serve you. Come in and see Honest Pancho today!” And then Lyra again: “Whap! Honest Pancho’s on the baaall! WHAP!” She faded doing a sinuous twitch. I turned the TV off feeling a little worse than when I turned it on.

Maybe, I thought, I’ve been too conservative. Maybe *I’d* better get on the baaaall, too. Or else. I shrugged the thought aside just as Thais slipped through the door—exactly on time.

I watched her strip off her smog mask and cinder cape—on office time—and place them carefully in the sterilizer. She was very careful not to smear the paint that was most of what she wore. I tapped a NoKanse alight and inhaled deeply. “Good morning, Thais,” I said.

“Whap!” she said in return. “I heard the TV all the way down the hall.”

She pulled a Lowfer out of the wall and settled down with her lap-desk across her knees. The tip of one sandal was just brushing my shin. The office, unfortunately, could have been bigger, but with sixteen million people living in the city, space was rather costly even

for a man with a better than average prot account.

“New paint?” I asked.

She smiled brilliantly at me. “Nice of you to notice, boss.” She fumbled in the pockets of the belt around her naked, cerise-painted middle and took out her pad and stylus. “On time and ready for work,” she said. “A calorie saved is a calorie earned.”

But now, somehow, I didn’t feel like attacking the day’s schedule. Not quite yet. Pancho’s commercial had disturbed me. “Thais,” I said. “I wonder if I’m—well, slowing down—”

“You, boss?” She fluffed her green-tinted hair provocatively and raised an eyebrow at me. “I wouldn’t say so.”

“I don’t mean that way,” I said. “I mean professionally. I wonder if I shouldn’t seek wider horizons.”

“New cases? *Different* cases? Give up divorce work? Oh, *Boss!*”

“Not give it up, Thais. Not that. I couldn’t. Divorce is my life. Could a doctor give up healing? Could a Freudist give up lobotomy? No, I didn’t mean that. Frankly, I meant should I get more aggressive. Go out and get cases that would have a certain advertising value.” I didn’t want to say I didn’t feel like spending good protein on the sort of advertising Pancho and some of the other Legal Eagles, an unethical lot really, were buying. Besides, we Obanions have always been rather frugal.

Thais’ face had come radiantly alive. “Oh, *Joe—*”

Now, that should have been a tip-off, because she *never* called me anything but boss. But I blundered right ahead because she was look-

ing at me as though I were Clarence Darrow or somebody.

"I have a case. A *real* case. If you would—if you only *would* take it, you'd be famous. More famous, that is. You'd be *really* famous."

I knew that Thais had some rather questionable friends, being a Franklinist and all. And I knew too that some of them were spacegooks. But The combination of Lyra singing for Pancho and the way Thais was looking at me made me get careless.

"Tell me about it," I said in my best legal manner.

Her face fell. "Non-terrestrial." And then she brightened. "But that's the whole point. These people are citizens of Terra now . . . and *think of it*—you will be the very first Legal Eagle to represent them in a divorce case tried under our laws."

Under our laws. Oh, I should have known. But almost all law is precedent. And I was blinded by trying a case that would *set* a precedent instead of follow one. Heaven help me, I said yes.

"Where are these spacegooks from? And what time can they be in the office tomorrow?"

"The Llagoe Islands on Venus," she said excitedly. "And they can be here anytime you say."

"Okay, ten hundred sharp. What do they do and how many people are involved?"

"They're musicians. And, uh, there are three. And two correspondents." She looked rather sheepishly at me as I raised my eyebrows and commented that even in this day and age of easy morality that was quite a number of 'people' to be involved in one divorce

case. Too many, in fact.

"Well, they *are* subject to our laws," she said doubtfully.

"Indeed they are—thanks to a Subversive Congress." I made a few notations on my desk pad. "Five of them, eh? A multiple marriage."

Thais' voice was very low. "Well, no. Not exactly."

"What then?"

She looked at me resignedly. "Three sexes," she said.

I GAVE UP my luncheon with Gleda; as much as I should have liked to split a five prot pony steak with her. Instead of the Palace, I went to the library. The *public* library. And read about Venerians. What I found out was interesting—and a little frightening, too. They were trisexual symbiotes. And they were only remotely humanoid.

There were very few of them on Terra—mainly because they relished their own planet's formaldehyde atmosphere so much they were extremely reluctant to leave it. When they did, . . . and this really interested me—they generally became very wealthy as entertainers. They were accomplished musicians and—of all things—tumblers.

For reasons that were only hinted at in the staid *Encyclopedia Terrestria*, Venerians never entertained through the mass media such as the Livies or TV. Their stuff was limited to small, elite gatherings and it cost plenty.

I thought of Gleda Warick and the party she was planning for later in the week. She'd asked me

to be alert for some good entertainment. Her friends were getting weary of games like Lizzie Borden and Clobber. Too many people getting hurt and all. Venerian tumblers and minisingers would be just the thing. And it would assure solvency on the part of my clients-to-be. Part of the Legal Eagle's Oath binds us to be concerned over our customer's finances.

The next morning, promptly at ten hundred, I was treated to the first sight of my clients. Their names didn't transliterate into anything remotely pronounceable, so they were going by the names of Vivian, Jean and Clare Jones.

After the first shock of seeing them wore off, I wrote on my pad: "Names used by humans of both genders. Significant."

They spoke English, the current *lingua franca*, with only a trace of a sibilant accent and they smelled of formaldehyde.

I explained their rights under our divorce laws. Did the best I could, that is, not being quite sure who was married to whom and under what conditions their marriage functioned—if at all. Finally I said, "Tell me all about it."

Clare, who seemed to be the spokesman for the group and therefore assumed, in my mind, a male gender, waved a boneless arm excitedly. "Had we known we were becoming subject to your Terrestrial laws by residing here we would never have remained. Our situation is desperate."

I wrote on my pad: "Situation desperate."

"Yes," hissed Vivian breathlessly. "Desperate."

I underlined *desperate*.

"We are, as you may know," Clare continued giving Vivian a dark look, "Trisexual symbiotes. You do not have any analogous situation among mammals on Terra."

I glanced at Thais. "We sure haven't," she said with feeling. "But it sounds *fabulous*."

"It is not, I assure you," Clare said running a four-fingered hand over his scaly crest in what I took to be a Venerian gesture of distraction. "We are not *married* as you people understand the term—"

"Not married," I wrote, underscoring it heavily.

"But your law enforcement agencies insist that our symbiosis is analogous to marriage and therefore subject to the regulations governing that odd institution."

"What a bore," Thais said helpfully.

"Our problem is this. The three of us live in what you might roughly call a connubial state. We—what is your word?—co-inhabit?"

"That's close," I said.

"We live together, that is. But more than eroticism is involved, I assure you."

"Of course." Now it began to sound like most of my other cases and I could get my teeth into it.

"You seem doubtful," the Venerian said with a sharp-toothed frown. "Let me reiterate that what I say is so. The three of us have spent a *ygith* together—that is more than fourteen of your long years. But now the *ygith* is over and we must seek another—how would you say it?—*liaison*?"

"This is essential?" I asked. "Not just a whim?" It is, you see,

the duty of a Legal Eagle to make every effort to save a marriage. In view of the circumstances, I felt that surely this was a marriage unique and therefore *worth* saving.

"No whim," declared Clare emphatically. "Each *ygith*—or what you Terrestrials would call 'mating period'—we must uh—realign. If we do not, deleterious effects are certain. Our health goes bad. We may even die."

"My friends," I said, "you have very little to worry about. There are many similar cases here on Terra. Just last week, for example, a divorce was granted in the case of Nork vs. Nork wherein it was established that the plaintiff, Mr. Nork was allergic to Mrs. Nork. A simple case, and not the first of its kind. I myself tried one such case wherein a wife broke out in a rash whenever her husband sought to question her about the household expenses. A divorce was granted on the grounds of basic incompatibility."

"Ah," Clare said sadly. "If it were only that simple. Our two correspondents, Gail and Evelyn, are ready to enter the realignment. But—" and here the Venerian glared at the smallest of the trio. "*this* ungrateful wretch is unwilling to adjust to the changed circumstances."

Great tears formed in Jean's slotted eyes. "How can you speak that way to me? After we've been through so much together?"

"Now, now—" This, who has a very soft heart, patted Jean in an effort to make he she or it feel better.

"Get to the point, Clare," Vivian said testily.

"It is our understanding that property held in joint tenancy by two contesting parties in a divorce case may be distributed at the discretion of the court."

"That's correct," I said.

"We contend, therefore, that Jean—" Clare pointed a scaly finger at the small Venerian, "is community property. Vivian's and mine. We wish to make an agreement between us for the disposal of it—"

"Wait a *minute*," I said, shocked. "I don't think you understand the community property laws at all. Jean is, by definition, a person. A person cannot be considered property or chattel. Oh, no—"

The small Venerian made a face at them. "I told you you couldn't get away with it," she said. "This isn't Venus, you know."

"On Venus you would be property," declared Vivian. And to me, he—she—I still get confused about this—added: "My sex was emancipated thirty *ygiths* ago at home. But Jean's is still considered—what did you call it?—chattel. No vote. No rights. Nothing but symbiosis."

"And Clare's is still the—uh—dominant one?" I asked hesitantly.

"That's the myth that's perpetrated," Clare declared acidly. "We *guths* do most of the work, if that means anything."

I wrote on my pad: "Guths—breadwinners."

"And who—well, forgive my delicacy, but—" I shrugged mundanely, "who bears the children?"

"We all do," the three Venerians chorused at once.

Well, that's the way the interview went. When the three Venerians finally left I had a rough out-

line for the brief on my pad. Besides the other comments, I had the following information:

Re Jones and Jones vs Jones, trsex smbytes!!

Clare—guth } See Ency
Vivian—warth } Terrestria
Jean—ith } PP 1099,
09 Ed Vol 17,

Jean—Community Property? No. Not under Terr Law See US vs Ignatz Wolk 1999. What then?

Correspondents: Evelyn (guth) Gail (warth) Any overt acts of infidelity? Probable. No proof.

Only obstacle: Jean. Must reach agreement.

IMPORTANT: Plaintiffs and Defendant or Defendants and Plaintiff not solvent. Must arrange something.

See Gleda.

And see Gleda I did. I asked her if she could use not two, not three, but FIVE Venerian entertainers. She could and would. At 1,000 prots a head for an hour's entertainment. That took care of that much, anyway. I was, I felt, well on the road to making legal history.

THE FOLLOWING day I made arrangements to meet Jean alone in a little bistro down on the Embarcadero. I felt the salt water air would make her-it feel more co-operative. But on the way down I became aware of someone following me. Cinder-caped and smog-masked, the tail I was dragging was inconspicuous enough, but I figured the thing about right. It was a Government

man. There could be only one answer. Honest Pancho had tipped the TBI that I was doing something illegal or immoral. I was an active Joe Mac and that would be enough to put the Witch Hunt Division of TBI on me even without Pancho getting wind of my dealings with the spacebooks.

The gimmick would be, of course, that I was taking advantage of them, violating their rights under the V Amendment of the World Constitution. Pure falsehood, but my previous unwise political affiliations put me under suspicion.

I looked up through the smog, and sure enough. An Eyespy hung in the air just over my head—a tiny transmitter about as big as a half erg piece. If I spit on the sidewalk, I thought, they'll haul me in on the double.

This was bad enough, but when and if I actually got the Venerians an interlocutory decree, I'd really have to watch it—and them, to see that nothing went wrong. The WH boys would have Pancho right at their shoulder watching for the slightest excuse to invalidate the decree.

I could get used to the Eyespy, and I thought I could convince Jean. And above all, I had to keep the Venerians from anything like sexual activity during the two day period of the decree. Nothing—but nothing—will invalidate a decree quicker than *that*. And an invalidated decree is very bad for a Legal Eagle's reputation.

I was, I thought darkly, getting into this thing deeper than I thought. But the rewards would be worth it. Think of it. To Legal Ea-

gle the *first* extraterrestrial divorce case in the history of the world! Holy Protein, I'd be in song and story.

I made my way through the press of people on the slidewalks, my Keep-A-Way crackling a jolly tune, and the Eyespy hovering over my head.

San Francisco is a wonderful place. Full of excitement and bustle. It's a port of entry, for one thing, with starliners letting down into the Bay from all over the Solar System. On the Embarcadero there were Sandies from Mars, Rooks from the Jovian System—every sort of spacegook there is. Except Venerians. And mingled with the crowd I could make out the distinctive cinder capes of the Longshoremen—absolute rulers of the district.

The bistro I was looking for was a floating platform moored to the ancient wharves, the ones that were left after the tidal wave caused by the bomb back in '59. It was a nautilus type joint, most of it under water, called the Deep Six.

An attendant took my cape and smog mask at the door and bowed me along to the maitre d'.

"A table, sir?" He clapped his hands for a waiter. "May I order you something? A morphine syrette? Phenobarb? We have a particularly fine aphrodisiac cocktail, sir. Or shall I just send the hostess to you and you can order later?"

I eyed the line up of girls regretfully. They were all lovely, all almost fully clothed—and what flesh was exposed was completely unpainted. If Thais looked like that, I thought sadly, I wouldn't

haggle about her price. But that was sheer depravity, I told myself sternly. That's what comes of associating with triple sexed spacegooks—I was here on business. Not pleasure.

"I'm meeting someone," I said. "A spaceg—a Venerian uh—lady. Miss Jones."

The maitre shrugged. "Everyone to his taste. The person you wish is at the corner table, sir. Near the window." And sure enough, there was Jean, her crest waving agitatedly as she pressed her three nostrilled nose against the glass watching the sandsharks swimming gracefully among the mossy pilings outside.

"Oh, Joe—just like *home*," she hissed softly as I sat down. She was very strong of formaldehyde today, I thought.

I didn't quite know how to begin with her. I had to make her see reason, but she seemed to be unwilling to pay any attention to me at all except to comment that Clare and Vivian were very cruel to her. "And after I've given them the best ygith of my life." Then she returned to her melancholy contemplation of the underseascape beyond the glass.

I ordered an alkie-and-treacle and sipped it thoughtfully watching Jean. An amber tear had formed in the outer corner of each slotted eye and was oozing gelatinously down her pale green cheeks.

It was like someone turning on a light in my brain. The answer was plain as day. Jean was homesick. Miserable. And a miserable woman—or man—or—well, does it matter?—a miserable *person* was

always contrary. Remove the misery and *voila*—gentle as a lamb.

"Jean," I said, "this case is important to me. You must help me get the decree. If you do—I'll do something nice for you."

Over my head the Eyespy clucked reproachfully, but I ignored it.

"Agree to the divorce. We can settle it in Collusion Court. And I'll see to it you get passage back to Venus on the first available starliner. How's that?"

"Back to Venus? Back Home?" Her eyes gleamed redly.

"That's a promise," I said. This would cost me plenty of prots, but the fame would be worth it. You can see how far gone I was on this case.

"Just one thing," I added thoughtfully. "What will become of the rest *after* the divorce? I mean, can two of each sex get along without a third? It sounds, well, almost unvenerian, if you know what I mean."

"The mating wouldn't be a very high-type experience," Jean said loftily, "without an *ith*—but it can take place. It's just the sort of disgusting business you could expect from people like Clare and Vivian. And those *other* two—*well*—you haven't met them, but really—"

"Then you'll do as I ask?"

Jean waved her crest at me seductively. "Joe Obanion, you're really very nice."

I backed away and swallowed hard as Jean laid a slick, webbed hand on my wrist. "How about it? Agreed?"

"You know," Jean said dreamily, "you remind me of a *warth* I used to know back home. He and

I and a really divine *guth* called Charlie had the most marvelous *ygith* together. I wonder if he remembers little me—?"

"I'm sure he does. How could she forget you?" I asked warily.

Jean blinked her slotted eyes at me and her thin lips split into a tusky smile. "You say the nicest things, Joe. Yes, baby, I'll do as you ask. I won't contest the divorce."

"Jean," I said with feeling, "you'll never regret this."

And the Eyespy clucked disapprovingly. Drop dead, Pancho, I thought. Drop dead twice. I had made it.

GLEDA WARICK'S house—mansion, really, lay sprawled over most of the Twin Peaks Area. From her Lunar Room you could see the whole of the city stretched out as if for inspection. To the east, the bay and the floating housing developments, wharves and night spots on and under the water. To the west the transocean highways, ribbons of plastic floating on the still Pacific. No one could afford to run ships now and almost all surface commerce was run over the highways in caravans of atomic trucks. To the Orient, to Alaska, to the Pacific islands. A steady string of lights moving at two hundred miles per hour. Rocket trails streaked the sky as starliners splashed into the bay and burbled to the surface, hissing and steaming. Market Street—all seven levels of it—ran from the base of the hills to the bay, a multilevel slideway jammed with people. The view from Gleda's place was mag-

nificent because of the infra-red antismog windows she had installed in the Lunar Room at a cost, incidentally, of 100,000 prots.

She had three rooms and a kitchenette. You entered her place and almost had an attack of agoraphobia. It was that big.

The place was overrun with people. I'd brought Thais, of course, resplendent in red and silver paint. Lyra Yves appeared in a solid coat of gilt, with that one breast and her left arm sheathed in flexible vinyl. Thais nudged me. "Look at that. I think it's disgusting."

I did look. I couldn't help myself. That shiny vinyl caught the eye of every man in the room. "Depraved," Thais sniffed.

Honest Pancho came in with an older man who was pointed out to me as an ethnologist from the University of California across the bay. A Professor Cripps.

Pancho, dressed in his customary green and orange enamel and embroidered cowboy boots, stumped across the room to give me the big hello.

"Jose, my boy! Good to see you . . ." He glanced up at the Eyespy. "Trouble with the Witch Hunters? Tsk tsk—"

"As if you didn't know," I snapped.

"You think I'd do a thing like that to a *friend*?"

"Yes."

He grinned a big toothy smile at me. "As a matter of fact, you're right. I hear you've got a big case. Non-terrie. Worth a lot to a Legal Eagle to be the first with a non-terrie case—"

"You're too late, you vulture,"

I said. "Interlocutory decree granted." I tapped my pouch. "Right here."

He shrugged. "Hope nothing happens to void it, old sport."

He winked at his silent companion, the staid and seemingly dumb professor. He turned back to me. "Sorry. Should have introduced you. Prof Cripps—this is my friend and competitor, Jose Obanion."

"Pleased," the Professor said, looking fearfully at the Government Eyespy over my head. His fingers went automatically to the engraved tablet he wore on a chain round his neck—a validated Loyalty Oath—as though to show the unseen TBI observers he wasn't *really* a friend of this Joe Mac's.

"The Prof," Honest Pancho said softly, "is a specialist in Venerian ethnology. He'd like to meet your clients."

That gave me a start. "He'll meet them. They're going to sing tonight."

The Professor's eyes widened. They looked shocked in his yellow painted face. "And dance?"

I smirked happily at Pancho. "And dance. At 1,000 prots each."

If Pancho had any reply for that, I don't know, for Gleda came in. She was wearing her hair blue and she wore a really striking pattern of iridescent blue paint with a double snake pattern coiling up her legs and torso.

The party got under way very quickly. Gleda supplied the alkie and treacle and everyone nibbled their own synthetic protein out of their pouches. The combination soon had an hilarious effect on the gathering and a couple that I didn't know, a boy and girl in particolored

green and blue, starting throwing small articles of furniture at the Eyespy over my head.

Couldn't hurt the Eye, of course, but I was kept pretty busy dodging. Then Thais suggested a quick game of Clobber. I must confess, not without satisfaction, that I cheated a little and peeked through the bandage so I could land a real lulu on Pancho's long pointed nose.

When Gleda stopped the bleeding and he was on his feet, someone asked Lyra for a song and the cry was taken up by all. I caught a glimpse of the five Venerians' round eyes peering at us out of the kitchenette. But Gleda was saving them for the last—the *piece de resistance*.

Lyra tore down a drapery and staggering a bit from two or three too many alkies-and-treacles, wrapped herself in it from head to foot. There was a shocked sort of gasp from the watchers. Professor Cripps turned red under his yellow paint.

Gleda put a tape on the MusiKall and Lyra went into her act. I've never seen anything like it. Swaying like a cobra, her bare feet pounding out the beat on the plastic floor, she raised the temperature about ten degrees in that room. Her green painted lips twisted in agony, her eyes rolled in the chromatic mask of her face. An old folk tune—not the sort of thing she generally did. Something that really tore at the heart-strings. A song that dated centuries back. History and the sense of our way of life lived in that room for a few short moments. Her voice was a blood-stirring trumpet—

“Mairzy Doats and Lammsy

Doats

And little kiddsie Divy—

A Kiddlee Tivy Too Would'n't you—?”

When it was over, there was a breathless hush in the room. I wondered where in the world Gleda had gotten that MusiKall tape—It had probably cost her plenty.

There was only one thing, I thought, that could top that. “Gleda,” I said. “*Now.*” Besides if the gooks didn't earn their prots, what about my fee? I was already losing protein on this deal. Passage to Venus isn't cheap.

The Venerians trooped in and squatted on the floor while Gleda made the introductions. The room began to smell very like an embalming room must smell.

“May I present Clare, Vivian, Gail, Evelyn and little Jean. They're going to sing for us.” Cheers from the guests. I glanced triumphantly at Pancho. The Professor seemed fascinated. “And,” added Gleda archly, “they may even tumble for us.” The Venerians looked at one another, tittered and flushed dark green. I was glad to see they were all on friendly terms with Jean.

Clare struck an attitude, crest erect, and waited until everyone quit shuffling around. Presently, they sang. I think it was singing. Very cultural. Very esoteric. Also very noisy. It sounded rather like they were all in pain.

After what seemed to me a very long time, they grew silent. There was a smattering of discontented applause. Gleda glared at me. I looked at Thais in dismay. “They also dance,” she said weakly.

“Yes,” Pancho said. “Let's see

them dance!"

"By all means," Gleda said, still eyeing me.

"Dance, fellows," I said hopefully.

Jean came over to me and whispered: "Are you sure it will be all right?"

"Do you want to ruin me? Dance. Tumble. Do something."

Jean shrugged and went back to where the Venerians squatted. "He says dance."

Evelyn and Gail stepped properly, I should say primly, aside and the other three began stomping about. The rhythm was infectious. The movements became more heated and shouts of approval began to ring out.

"Dance, Gookie!"

"Whapperoonie!"

"Go go go Gook!"

I was delighted. So was everyone else. The dance grew more and more violent. There was a great deal of body contact in it. Evelyn and Gail looked longingly at the gyrating three, but kept out of it. I wondered why—never knowing that the Venerians are a *very* conventional people.

Pancho was delighted. So was the Professor. In the middle of it, the prof raised his hands and made a signal. An earsplitting clangor broke from the Eyespy.

The Venerians stopped.

Everyone stared at the Eye.

And at me.

The Professor stepped forward and flipped his Loyalty Oath over, it opened like a poison-ring. The engraving inside said TBI Morals Division.

"The Interlocutory Decree, if you please," he commanded.

Stunned, I fished it out and handed it over.

He glanced at it. "You realize of course that this is immediately invalidated."

"What?" I couldn't believe my ears.

"You know—as any Legal Eagle should know—that any reestablishment of—uh—connubial rights abrogates an interlocutory."

"Of course I know that."

He glanced at Honest Pancho and smiled. There was triumph flashing between them like a shuttlecock. "You Joe Macs never learn. The law is the law. What do you think your clients were just doing—and in front of a roomful of witnesses?"

I felt my heart sink. "You mean—?"

Cripps nodded.

"That?" I asked weakly.

"*That*," he said, and tore up the paper.

I watched my future as a Legal Eagle flutter down to the floor. "And I thought they were dancing," Thais said sadly.

Well, the story doesn't end quite there. Gleda and I were arrested for running an obscene show. Gleda doesn't speak to me anymore. Nor do any of the people who were there that night. Lyra and Gleda get all their divorces at Pancho's Splitzmart now. It took most of my prot account to bail us out and pay our fines. Thais is with me. We're married and we haven't a prot between us for a divorce, so we'll just have to *stay* married.

The Venerians came out all right though. They were deported.

• • •

the gun runners

George Dolan had four immediate problems:

the time-translator, a beautiful, out-of-this-world girl named Moirta, the gun runners and his life. A situation in which he finally triumphed . . . But what can you do with a victory that lies at the other end of a bridge 10,000 years long?

BY RALPH WILLIAMS

THE GUN RUNNERS were professionals, and except for one minor detail the operation had been very well planned.

The middle twentieth century was chosen as a source of supply after a careful survey of all factors pro and con. The gun-runners did not want the mass weapons of their own day, they wanted selective weapons which could be used for private murder. In the mid-twentieth century, the level of technology was such that well-made and reliable weapons were available; and at the same time, social control was still sketchy enough to

permit quiet procurement of such merchandise, if one knew how to go about it and was suitably financed.

The gun runners, two men and a woman, knew how to go about it, and they were suitably financed. The profits in their business were commensurate with the risks—which were not small.

In their world unauthorized time travel was highly illegal, because of certain possible undesirable effects on the total space-time continuum, and was severely punished. Moreover, it was personally uncomfortable and dangerous.



They came from an old ingrowing world which had never reached the stars, where there were only men and their works, no blade of grass or micro-organism or sparrow which did not directly serve men. In their time, hereditary traits which had meant untimely and certain death in earlier times had persisted and multiplied. Immunities and instincts which had fitted men to live with tigers and streptococci, and seek their food in the wilderness, had atrophied.

The twentieth century was a dangerous environment for these people, more so perhaps than the Eocene would have been for *homo sapiens*. In preparation for their venture, it had been necessary for them to undergo a drastic and painful series of tests, inoculations, conditionings and plastic surgery.

Unfortunately, it had not occurred to them that their time machine might need similar protection. The equipment was basically electronic, and the power leads were encased in a new insulation, a synthetic protein which in very thin films afforded a near perfect dielectric. It was also, as it happened, an almost perfect culture medium for certain bacilli, non-existent in the sterile future, but healthy and thriving and full of appetite in the twentieth century.

When the gun runners prepared to return to their own time with their cargo of contraband there were small flashes of fire, and smoke curled briefly from various parts of the equipment. Their temporal environment remained unchanged.

The gun runners were not technicians, they were specialists in

other fields. They pulled and prodded uncertainly here and there, pushed the buttons again.

Nothing happened.

The senior gun runner, a man who wore in this century the appearance of a quiet, gray-haired professional man, and who wore in any century the habit of command, came to a decision. He spoke in their own language, a language time had pruned to telegraphic brevity:

"If tamper, make worse. Electronics technicians this era. Use."

The second man raised an eyebrow. "Knowledge adequate? Time travel not simple."

The older man shrugged. "Theory not simple, machine simple. Savages clever fingers. Adequate stimulus, can solve."

"And after? Disposition?"

"Displacement effect. Or—" the senior gun runner sketched a quick gesture of pulling a trigger.

The younger man nodded slowly, still dubious—which was proper, it was his function to be suspicious and questioning, as it was the other's to command. "Stimulus?"

"Profit. Curiosity. And . . . Moirta."

Both men turned and looked approvingly at the woman, who had not yet entered the discussion. She was a very narrow specialist, within the wider specialty of gun-running and murder. Now she moved her shoulders uneasily. "Displacement effect," she suggested, "near limit. If caught—" she made an unpleasantly suggestive spastic gesture.

The chief gun runner shrugged again. "If caught," he repeated the gesture she had made, "in any case.

No choice. Find technician now.”

GEORGE DOLAN studied his visitors thoughtfully.

“Well, actually,” he said, “our work is design, not repair. I suppose I could send a man out to look over your job and recommend a firm to handle it. Is that what you want?”

“Mr. Dolan,” the gray-haired man said earnestly, “I am afraid you still misunderstand me. The work we wish done is small in scale, but very intricate and delicate, and highly confidential. We have investigated your qualifications, and you are the man we want to handle it, you personally. We do not want you to mention this work to any other person—not even your wife.”

“I don’t have a wife,” Dolan said. “That’s no problem.” He hesitated. “Do I need security clearance? That’ll take time.”

“No security clearance. This is private work.”

Dolan frowned. Private work, money no object, very secret—there were implications to this offer which he did not like.

On the other hand—

His eye strayed to the young woman who sat quietly beside the man, silently exercising her specialty. The plastic surgeons of her era had done a beautiful and nearly perfect job on her body; but bone-deep, in ways an observant man could sense, she was still not a twentieth century woman. In a city full of women who made a profession of being young and handsome, she too was young and handsome, but different.

Dolan was an observant man,

and a curious one.

He looked back at Brown. “If you could just give me some idea —” he said tentatively.

“The equipment, as I have said, is very intricate, and we are not technicians. We prefer that you make your own diagnosis.”

Dolan pursed his lips uncertainly. He glanced again at the girl.

“OK,” he said at last, “I’ll look at it. I can’t promise anything.”

He punched a button on the desk intercom. “Betty, I’m going out to look at a job with Mr. Brown and Miss—uh—” he glanced at the girl.

“Jones,” the gray-haired man said. “Miss Jones.”

“Oh, yes, excuse me.” Dolan smiled at the girl and drew a brief quirk of the lips in response. “—with Mr. Brown and Miss Jones,” he continued. “Be back some time this afternoon.”

“OK,” he said to his clients. “Let’s go see this intricate and delicate problem.”

For reasons compatible with the profession of gun-running and the nature of time travel, the time translator had been located outside of urban limits—the city was to be rather systematically bombed in the near future—on a secluded and stable granite dike, within the shell of a frame cottage. Dolan observed all this without comment.

They were met outside the cottage by a man about Dolan’s age.

“This is my colleague, Mr. Smith,” Brown introduced him.

Mr. Smith offered his hand. As he turned to lead them inside, Dolan noticed that the light summer jacket Smith wore did not

drape well over the right hip pocket. He filed this fact also for future reference.

"And here," Brown said, "is the machine we wish repaired."

In the center of the room was an orderly jumble of shiny black geometric solids, laced together with wires and bars of silver, the whole mounted on a polished ebony platform. It was handsome, in a bizarre sort of way; but certainly it did not look like any electronic gear Dolan had ever seen, and he had seen almost all there was, at one time or another.

He studied it carefully, turning it this way and that in his mind, trying to find some familiar feature to grasp it by. There was none.

"Well," he asked skeptically, "what is it? What does it do?"

Brown shook his head. "The purpose of the machine must remain secret," he said firmly. "We think the trouble may be superficial, some minor thing an expert could quickly repair; and we wish you to work on it from that viewpoint, without inquiring into its purpose."

"I see," Dolan said noncommittally. The whole business was screwy. For two cents, he thought—

He glanced at the girl. She sat quietly on a chair, hands folded demurely in her lap, watching him, practising her specialty. Well, maybe, he thought, it wouldn't hurt to look, as long as he was here anyway.

He walked over to the equipment and bent to examine it. The silver conductors seemed to be uninsulated, although in places they were closely paired. He frowned and scratched tentatively at one with

his fingernail. The metal showed bright. There was a slight tarnish, that was all, no insulation.

He noticed something else. Back of the equipment, at an angle unnoticeable from the side he had first approached, were several cut and dangling wires, some of which had been partially replaced by quite ordinary high tension cable. Spread about on the floor were lengths and coils of wire.

"You've been working on it yourselves?" he asked Brown.

"No, no. As I told you, we are not technicians. Before we contacted you, we had already tried another man. He proved unsatisfactory. We, uh, paid him off and sought a better qualified person."

"Unsatisfactory, eh? Umm, I see." Dolan's eyes moved thoughtfully to Smith, who lounged carelessly just inside the door. The coat now hung smoothly, it was only when Smith moved that the hint of a bulge showed.

Dolan was a curious man, but also a prudent and thoughtful one. He decided he did not want this job, it was time to get out. "I'll have to go back for some equipment," he said casually. "Can you drive me in?"

He knew immediately that it was not going over. Brown frowned and sucked thoughtfully at his lower lip.

"If you could make a list," Brown offered, "I could get it for you. You could then be making a preliminary survey while I am gone. There is a question of time involved, we wish these repairs made as quickly as possible."

"Well . . . I'm not sure . . ."

"Miss Jones," Brown said per-

suasively, "is as well-versed as any of us in the operation of the equipment. She could answer any questions you might have."

The girl smiled and nodded. Smith, lounging by the door, casually moved his hand to his belt, sweeping back his unbuttoned jacket slightly. Brown stood waiting.

Dolan studied them silently for a moment. They couldn't force him to take the job, he could simply turn them down and walk out. Or could he? For some reason he did not quite understand, he was just a little reluctant to test the idea.

"OK," he said shortly. He took his notebook and began to scribble a list of equipment on a blank page. A message, he wondered, like they do it in the movies? A request, maybe, for some outrageous piece of equipment that would tip off the boys in the shop? No good, they weren't that smart, and for that matter neither was he. Besides, what did he really know? Nothing, except that he just didn't want this job very much.

He tore the page out of the notebook and handed it to Brown. Brown slipped it in his pocket and went out.

Dolan turned to the girl. "OK, Miss Jones," he said. "Now let's see what we can figure out about this gear." He strolled completely around it, eyeing it from all sides.

"Well . . ." he said dubiously. "First, I guess, control. How do you start it up, make it go?"

"We push these buttons, in this sequence," the girl told him. She moved her fingers lightly over a series of studs set in a small cube.

"OK, push 'em. Let's see what

happens."

"Nothing happens," the girl said. "The machine just doesn't work."

"Well, then, what's supposed to happen?"

The girl looked unhappy. "I'm sorry," she said finally, "didn't Mr. Brown say you weren't to ask such questions?"

"OK," Dolan said resignedly, "we'll let that go then. How about this: What indications do you have when it is operating normally? Anything light up, move, buzz, hum, spin around?"

The girl frowned thoughtfully and shook her head. "Nothing lights up, moves, buzzes, hums, spins around. When the machine works, it . . . well, it just works, and that's all." She studied him with troubled eyes. "You are an expert, it seems to me an expert should be able to look at a machine and see what parts are faulty, isn't that true? Why must you know what the machine does?"

Dolan leaned back against the machine and lit a cigarette. He squinted thoughtfully at her through the smoke. Well, what the hell, with looks like that, why should she need brains?

"Miss Jones," he said patiently, "I gather that you aren't a technical person?"

"Not with machines, no."

It was an odd sort of answer. Did it imply that she had a technical knowledge of something other than machines? Dolan considered it briefly and decided to pass it up for now.

"I *am* a technically trained person," he said, "an expert as you say; and I can tell you this: machinery, electronic gear, anything

like that, is built to do a specific job. Before you can design, build, or repair such equipment, the very first thing you have to know is: what do you want it to do? For all I know, this machine here may just be an overgrown coffee percolator. Now, suppose I go ahead and fix it with that in mind, and when I get done it makes beautiful coffee, but it turns out you wanted all along for it to get television programs, you're going to be terribly disappointed. You see now why I have to know what it does?"

The girl nodded seriously. "Yes," she admitted, "I can see that; but I'm sorry, I still cannot tell you the purpose of the machine." She glanced uncertainly at Smith. He shook his head minutely. "Perhaps," she said, "when Mr. Brown returns—"

BBROWN, however, did not convince easy.

Dolan puffed angrily at a cigarette, while Brown and the girl watched him impassively.

"Damn it," he said, "it just won't work like this, that's all there is to it." He kicked savagely at the base of the machine. "All I'm doing is chasing my tail in circles. I know what part of the trouble is now, somehow you've lost the insulation on your conductors—burned up, evaporated, blew away, God knows what. Anyway, it's gone. But I can't just spray some gunk back on and have it work like new, we just haven't got that kind of insulation. Where'd you get that stuff, anyway. Can't you get some more?"

"It was specially made for us," Brown told him. "We cannot get

more at . . . present."

"I see." There had been a very slight accent on the "present". Did it mean anything? And if so, what? "Well, I can rewire it for you, use standard stuff, it won't look pretty but it might work, only what should I use? I don't know what it needs—high voltage cable, or bell wire; shielded or open. I've got to know what you've got in these black boxes here—" he pounded gently on one, "before I know what to feed them."

He snapped his cigarette into a corner, gloomily watched the smoke curl up from it for a moment, then walked over and stepped heavily on it. "So that's it," he said definitely. "I've been fooling with this thing all day, and that's just exactly as far as I can go. It's up to you people, you can give me the dope, I can't promise anything even then, except just to try; or you might as well pay me off. I can hang around here and put in more time, but you won't be getting anything out of it."

Brown studied his fingernails absently. "Perhaps you are right," he said slowly, "However, I cannot act without consulting with Mr. Smith, and he has gone into town to get some food for you, I am sure you must be hungry. When he returns, I will let you know our decision."

"OK." Dolan mopped at his face with his handkerchief. "God, it's hot as an oven in this shack," he said. Miss Jones smiled in sympathy, though she looked cool enough.

"Come on, Miss Jones, let's get outside and cool off a bit."

"I think that would be nice," she agreed.

It was just turning dusk outside,

and there was an agreeable breeze coming up the valley. They walked over and sat down on a rocky ledge.

"Tell me, Miss Jones," he said suddenly, "do you like it here?"

"It's very pretty," she said. She looked out toward the ridge with the sunset colors fading behind it. "Much nicer than the city."

"No, no," he said brusquely, "that's not what I mean. I mean, do you like it *here*, in our world?"

"I don't think I understand you."

"I mean here, now, on this planet, in this time. Do you like it as well as your own . . . place?"

She stared up at him with wide puzzled eyes. "My own place? What other planet or time do you think I might know?"

"I don't know, Miss Jones, I just . . ." He was not quite sure exactly what he had been driving at, himself. "Forget it. Just a stupid idea." He leaned back and let his eye follow the shadows up the valley. A faint whiff of perfume reached him.

"Miss Jones," he said. "That's rather an awkward thing to call you. Do you have a first name?"

"Jane Jones, naturally," she said, and smiled. "What else?"

"No good," he said firmly. "I might call you Mary, that's a nice anonymous tag, and sounds better too . . . or you could tell me your real name, just the first name, that wouldn't give much away."

She considered silently. "Moirta," she said finally. "My name is Moirta." She accented the syllables evenly.

"Moirta," he repeated. "Moir-ta." He rolled the "r" slightly, as she had done. "That's much better, it fits you now, Moirta, and it fits the cool shades of evenin'."

He looked down at her.

"Moirta," he said soberly. "It's a lovely name, truly."

He leaned forward and kissed her. Her lips met his, not coldly, and not demandingly or fiercely, but gently and firmly, in the exact measure he desired. He put his arms about her, and she came into them, supple but not limp, as a beautifully trained dancer follows a lead. For a very long moment they remained thus, lip to lip and breast to breast, the yearning and response in each rising in swift even balance.

And then Brown opened the door, casting a shaft of light past them in the dusk.

"Oh, Moirta," he called. "Are you there? Could you come here a moment, please—"

The two male gun runners had stepped outside the cottage while Moirta served Dolan his dinner. They found the smells and sounds of summer night, the darkness itself—in their world there was no darkness except in closed rooms—disturbing, but preferable to watching and hearing Dolan eat.

"For primitive, natural," the senior gun-runner said, "but—" he winced, "*teeth!*"

"*Gnawing!*" the other agreed. He clicked his own non-functional dentures experimentally, examined his fingers with fascinated revulsion. Tender flesh, white teeth—ugh!

"Moirta," he said thoughtfully, "seems not to mind."

The senior gun runner cringed as a bat fluttered by. "Her specialty, he said absently, "not to mind." He strained his eyes to see into the darkness. Was that a mouse rustling

in the grass? Or worse yet, a *snake*?

"Progress?" the younger man asked.

"Motivation set. Next, focus on problem. Pressure." It was *something*, something small and alive, coming toward him. "Move nearer door," he said abruptly. "Light."

"Mr. Smith and I have discussed the matter," Brown said, "and we have decided to be completely frank with you." He paused, watching Dolan. "The machine is a time translator," he said.

Dolan looked back at him, poker-faced. "So?"

Brown frowned slightly. Perhaps he had expected more of a reaction. "We are from a time very far in your future," he continued. "The machine has the apparent effect of transferring our physical bodies to this age. I say 'apparent' effect, because the mechanism of this time translation is not fully understood. There are certain anomalies, the displacement effect for example—but that is immaterial, for all practical purposes we can move at will to and from any time in our past, though not into our future—when the machine is working.

"Naturally, such time travel must be kept secret, if it were not, several undesirable consequences might arise. It is very closely regulated, and may be used only for bona fide historical research by responsible persons."

He looked inquiringly at Dolan. "I am not really sure I can tell you much more about the machine, I am not a technician, as you know. Does what I have told you help any?"

"I don't know," Dolan said. "Let me think about it a minute." He was not really much surprised at the disclosure. In terms of the technology he knew, the machine was almost completely meaningless. From the beginning, there had only been two possibilities—either it was the product of an alien culture, or it was an elaborate hoax. He had already decided it was not a hoax. He had not, he realized, allowed himself to explore fully the implications of the other possibility. He did so now, and some of the implications were—intriguing.

Historical research, eh? Well, maybe. He would reserve judgment on that.

But a time machine? There was no such thing. And yet, if there were—

He looked at the jumble of equipment speculatively.

"I still don't know how a time machine might work," he said finally. "Do you have any sort of handbook, operating manual, anything like that? Or do they have such things in your time?"

"Operating manual? I don't think so. There are some pictures—" Brown stepped over to the machine and touched a large flattened sphere which grew out of the base. "This is the power unit. If you press these studs, various pictures—'schematics', I believe you would call them—are projected on the surface. Is that what you want?"

"That sounds like it," Dolan said. "But I did press those studs. Nothing happened."

"That is because the power unit is not operating. It does not come

on, as it should, when we press this button." He indicated a stud on the cubicle control unit. "That, I suppose, is one of the major things wrong with the machine."

"Ummm, yeah, I see," Dolan said. He squatted and examined the power unit more closely. "One of these pairs now—" he traced them with his finger up to the control unit, "must be the control pair." He took a piece of chalk and began numbering the terminals rapidly.

"Now," he said, "if the control pair is shorted, the power should be on, but there must be overload protection of some kind, that's probably kicked out, so let's just cut all this junk loose and then short the possible control pairs one at a time, see what happens then."

He reached for a pair of side-cutters. The three gun-runners looked at each other. Brown nodded slightly. They moved quickly back out of Dolan's way.

"OK," Dolan said half an hour later. "We've got the power unit perking, and we've got the pictures. Now what do they mean? This block interwiring diagram now, it seems to be what I'm looking for, but I can't read the tags they've got on it. You know which block in the diagram corresponds to which piece of equipment?"

Brown studied the luminous white lines against the black polished background. He put a well-manicured finger on one square. "According to the lettering," he said, "this is the control unity, the small cube at the top with the buttons. This other, I do not know, it says: 'temporal re-integrator.' I

do not know what that might be." Dolan frowned doubtfully. "Temporal re-integrator," he repeated. "Could be anything. What do the others say?" Among the litter the first electrician had left, there was a short length of lead-shielded two-conductor number 14 wire. He picked it up and began to run it absently through his fingers, straightening it. Someone had apparently amused themselves by clipping idly at it with a pair of side-cutters, it was irregularly nicked along its length.

"This," Brown continued, "is something called a 'selective resonator', and this, well, the term does not translate, it is a—" he pronounced carefully, as if unfamiliar with the word, "'bractor-quick'—"

There was something peculiar about the indentations in the wire, Dolan realized, a pattern—He pulled it unobtrusively through his fingers again, letting his thumbnail run over the nicks. It was Morse: K-I-T-T-E . . . *kitten?* . . . no, it must be American Morse . . . K-I-L-L-E-R . . . *killers his end rrr rd*

Killers in the house at the end of River Road.

This was the house at the end of River Road.

Brown had stopped speaking and was looking at him questioningly.

"Uh, yeah," Dolan said hastily. "Well, that still doesn't tell me too much." He carefully rolled the length of wire and hung it on a projecting piece of the time translator. His hands were damp, and he was sure he was moving awkwardly and unnaturally. Dolan was not an easily flustered person, but

things were coming a little fast—mysterious aliens, time machines, and now—murder, or hint of it.

He needed time to think.

"It's getting pretty late," he said, hoping his voice sounded natural. "Let's just knock off for now, I'll study it over, maybe I'll have something figured by tomorrow."

Historical research, huh? Some professors all right, this bunch—

The thing to do was to stall, not let them know he suspected anything.

"I tell you," he said casually, "do you have some place I could bed down here? Save me a trip into town and 'back."

Was it his imagination, or did Brown relax slightly?

"Why, yes, we do have a spare cot in Mr. Smith's room," Brown said. "Would that be good enough?"

"Sounds fine," Dolan said. He snapped the lid of his tool-box shut. "Let's go see what it looks like."

THE TWO MALE gun runners held a council of war while Dolan was eating his breakfast.

"Subject's attention diverted," the senior gun runner said. "Unknown factor. Annoying."

Smith clucked his tongue in sympathy. He thought for a moment. "Raise threshold to override?" he suggested.

"Must. Moirta."

Smith nodded and went out. He returned in a moment with the female gun runner. Brown explained the problem to her in the same few words he had used to Smith.

She shrugged. She did not bother to practise her specialty on her colleagues—they were, for one thing, almost immune, they had grown up in a civilization where her specialty was over-crowded. For another, in the nature of her specialty, she found it hard to concentrate on more than one subject at a time. "Doing best," she said indifferently.

Brown studied her shrewdly. "Supplies short," he said mildly. "One-half larger than one-third. Each must pay way."

His voice was mild, but Moirta understood the threat quite clearly. "Suggestions?" she asked coldly.

Brown nodded equably—he was used to temperament in this member of his team—and told her what he wanted her to do. She would obey, he knew. She would also double-cross him, if the occasion offered; but he did not intend that the occasion *should* offer.

There was a foot-path leading up the ridge back of the cabin. Dolan did not ordinarily feel the need of an after-breakfast stroll, but today he was looking for something. He was not quite sure what it would be, but he thought he would recognize it if he saw it. He walked slowly up the foot-path, letting his eyes roam. Perhaps fifty yards from the cottage, the grass was trampled and the brush bent where someone had left the path.

This might be it.

He followed the trampled trail off the path, searching carefully now. Three or four steps along it, he found what he had been looking for—two empty .45 caliber cartridges lying in the grass.

He picked them up and juggled them in his hand, looking speculatively about. Angling off to the left was an opening in the undergrowth.

He walked that way and found himself standing on the lip of a sharply eroded gully. Someone or something had kicked the bank down recently, there was a great pile of new earth in the bottom of the gully. He kicked around in the leaves and mold at his feet. There was a dark crusted substance on the leaves.

The door of the cottage slammed. He slipped the empty cartridges in his pocket and stepped hastily back to the path, listening.

Were those footsteps hurrying toward him?

He began to stroll slowly back toward the cottage. Around the first turn he met Moirta.

The girl now, he thought, where does she really fit? Possible ally? Enemy? Or neutral?

She came up to him a little breathless and took his hand. "Were you going back to the house?" she asked.

"Not specially. Just walking around."

"Let's not go back just yet, then," she said. They turned and walked slowly back up the path, hand-in-hand. After a while they came out on an open shoulder from which they could look down, catching glimpses of the path they had climbed here and there, and at its end the cottage. They sat down close together, leaning back against a large tree, not speaking at first.

After a while the girl sighed. "I shall feel very sorry when we leave this time," she said.

"Me, too." He kissed her.

After a moment she pulled away and looked at him searchingly. "There is something bothering you?" she asked. She flushed a little. "That was not very . . . ardent."

Dolan looked away, feeling foolish. "I guess not," he said.

She took his hand and squeezed it. "Poor George. It must be very confusing for you. Can I help?"

Perhaps she could, he thought.

"Look here," he said cautiously, "what happens when I get this thing fixed, if I do? You folks go on back to your own time, I suppose, but what happens to me?"

She hesitated. "I don't think I understand," she said. "Mr. Brown pays you for your work, I suppose, and you stay here, that's all. Should there be more?"

Dolan smiled grimly. "Like the first technician, huh?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, Brown pays me, and I stay here, like the first technician." He took his hand out of his pocket with the two empty cartridge cases in it and rolled them gently back and forth in his open palm.

Moirta stared at them fascinated. "Oh," she said faintly, "I didn't know. I thought . . . I didn't know . . ."

"Well, you know now," he said.

"And your job is to keep me cheered up and plugging away at the job until payday comes. Right?"

"No," she said. "Oh, no. Please, George. They wouldn't do that . . . that is, I don't think . . . it's so unnecessary."

"Unnecessary?"

"Yes. You see— I shouldn't tell you this, but I can't have you thinking . . . you see, after we are gone,

you will forget all this. Why should they kill you when there's no reason?"

She did not seem very strongly convinced herself, Dolan thought.

"How do you mean, I'll forget it? You mean they'll hypnotize me, something like that?"

She shook her head. "No, they won't have to do anything. It's the displacement effect. You see, we are not *really* here, in a way, it is a sort of illusion, but more real for us than for you. When we return to our own time, we will remember all that happened, but you will remember nothing, since the translator does not really exist in your time. You will just forget, it will be as if none of this had ever happened, as if you had never met me, never heard of a 'time-translator'."

It sounded plausible, in a way, but there was a flaw in the logic.

"If everybody in this time forgets, why so much to-do about secrecy? Won't anyone else I tell forget too?"

"There is a limit to the possible displacement. If the limit is exceeded, according to the Alwyn hypothesis the continuum itself may be altered, and one of the ways in which it might change would be to eliminate the irritant—in other words, all of us concerned directly."

"I see. So they figured two of us put too much of a strain on the displacement, that's why they killed this other joker—what was his name, anyway?"

"Nelson. Perhaps," she said uncertainly, "that might be it."

"And maybe they figure even one is too much strain, better to be

safe than sorry, huh?"

"No, I don't think so. Killing requires even more displacement than . . . loss of memory. Really, I don't understand it, you see, I am just a sort of employee, they don't confide in me. If they knew I had been talking to you about these things like this—" she shuddered and smiled wryly. "Perhaps I too know too much, perhaps I should be worrying about the pros and cons of various types of displacement for myself."

Dolan looked at her thoughtfully. "This displacement thing," he said gently, "I'll forget you too?"

She nodded. "You will forget me. But I will remember you—for a long time, I am afraid."

He frowned and kicked at a tuft of sod. "I don't want to forget you. Do you have to leave with the others? Couldn't you stay? For a little while anyway? You haven't really had a good chance to see our world yet."

"No. They would never trust me out of their control. If I refused to go . . . well . . ." she shrugged.

"And I don't suppose I could go back with you to your world, spend some time there, either?"

"No, that would be to travel into your own future, which cannot be done."

"I see." Dolan leaned back against the tree, thinking.

"Well, there's one thing sure," he said. "If the machine can't be fixed, it can't be fixed, there isn't much they can do about it. You may *all* stay in this time yet."

She shook her head gently. "Not all. At least, not all alive. There would be no displacement, and the only hope they would have to avoid

the Alwyn action would be to preserve absolute secrecy. You have a saying, I believe: 'dead men—'" She hesitated. "Even if you and I could find a way to escape, even if they *told* me I might leave, I could not trust them. They are very dangerous men. As long as we and they are both in this time, there would be no safety for me, nor for you."

"I suppose you're right," Dolan said reluctantly. He looked down at her searchingly. "What do you *want* to do?" he asked. "Do you want to stay with me, or do you want me to forget you?"

"I want to be with you," she said softly. "Always."

"And I, with you," he said. He bent his head toward hers.

Below, the door of the cottage opened. Smith's figure appeared. He glanced around and then came plodding up the path.

Moirta pulled away and got to her feet. "We might as well start back, I suppose," she said unenthusiastically.

"Let's go back in the woods, he won't find us there."

She hesitated and then shook her head. "No. We have both been very indiscreet today, and they are suspicious men. It is important in their trade to be suspicious. It would not be wise to let them think we are avoiding them."

"OK, I suppose not," he acknowledged glumly. He rose and followed her down the path.

LIKE ALL true artists, Moirta tended to submerge herself completely in her role, a failing which the senior gun runner recognized

and allowed for in his calculations.

In the following days, Dolan held her hand often, and kissed her sometimes, and talked with her frequently, and took her in his arms for short periods; but at the crucial moment Smith or Brown always casually appeared upon the scene. Dolan suspected, accurately, that they were deliberately permitting him just enough contact with her to keep him constantly on edge, keep his mind off other matters.

They made no overt threats, but he was constantly aware of the body in the gully, the bulge in Smith's pocket, Brown's cold eyes studying him. Dolan was not a submissive person, and under the pressure a cold malevolence toward the two gun-runners began to develop in him. He concealed it, as well as he could, under a shell of impassivity.

His time would come. The sketch of a plan was beginning to form in his mind, it was not very solid yet, but if it worked out they would be laughing on the other side of their faces.

What was it Moirta had said? There would be danger "as long as we and they are both in this time." The answer to that was simple. Eliminate "they" and eliminate the danger.

In his work, Dolan kept running into reminders of the first technician, and the matter bothered him. The man seemed to have been making progress, and surely he would not have been such a fool as simply to refuse to work, the message he had left showed he understood quite clearly his danger. He asked Moirta about this, and got another shock.

"That was a mistake," she said. "We did not fully understand your world then. In our time, medical science is very exact. There are no incomplete men or incomplete women. We assumed that because this man . . . person . . . looked like a man, and seemed to be a man, he was one. However, we have since discovered that this is not always true, and it was not in this case. We could not allow him to work on the machine, since we could not predict his reactions adequately."

Not predict his reactions? There was an obvious corollary—

Dolan's lips tightened. "But you *can* predict mine, is that it?"

Moirta ran her fingers lightly along the back of his hand, studying his knuckles with the tips of them. "Of course," she said idly, "Why not? There is nothing wrong with *your* reactions, George dear."

He flung her hand away violently. "Why not? So you push the buttons, and I react as predicted, and you sit back and laugh at me while I fix your machine, and then you all go tootling off to find more suckers, while I hold the bag. That's it, isn't it? Boy, I bet you've been getting a *big* charge out of this. I thought it was mighty coincidental the way one of your boyfriends always pops up as soon as we're alone for five minutes. Not taking any chances on the reaction getting out of hand, are you?"

She stared up at him in shocked surprise. "No," she said, "no. Oh, poor George. How stupid of me. You see, I am not really very wise, I know only one thing, how to be a woman. I keep forgetting that you do not think as we do. Because we

can predict a reaction, does that make it less real?"

"But you *used* me, you knew this would happen."

There were tears in her eyes. "I used you," she admitted, "and I used myself, and Brown used both you *and* me.

"And you used me, also. Do you wish me to think that when you hold a woman's hand, and say certain things to her, and look at her in a certain way; you are entirely innocent, you do not guess what may happen?"

"I didn't force you," he said stubbornly, "the choice was yours to make."

"Nor did I force you. But I knew what your choice would be, and further, I knew what *my* choice would be. Emotion is my trade, as electronics is yours. Electrons, I have been told, have a certain freedom of choice, or appear to have. Yet you know with quite high probability which choice they will make under the influence of certain physical fields. In the same way, I know what choice to expect of a man or a woman, under the influence of certain emotional fields."

"You didn't want *me*, though, you just wanted a technician. The first man would have done just as well for you, if he had 'reacted.'"

"That is true. And I am the first woman you have ever made love to?"

"No, of course not. But I've never felt the same about them as I do about you."

"I, the same. George, I think you still do not understand me. In your time there are women who get things from men by seeming to



promise more than they intend to give, for simulating emotions they do not feel. You think I am one of those . . . no, please don't interrupt . . . I am not. In my time there are no such women, people understand each other too well, they are too hard to fool.

"Instead, there are women like me, women who are peculiarly attractive to men, and peculiarly susceptible to men—honestly so. Believe me, it is not an easy way to make a living. A woman has only so much honest emotion to give. Do you understand now?" She looked up at him appealingly.

He did not understand, but he believed.

He could not doubt that this was as important to her as to him, that regardless of the motives behind it, her feeling was deep and honest. And yet, it was impossible to understand, impossible for him to visualize a world in which people

knew accurately the feeling others held for them; and yet still loved, disliked, or were indifferent. It was, he thought, a little like a caveman trying to understand the complexities and compulsions of polite urban society.

He slumped back down beside her. "I don't know," he said glumly. "You're right, I suppose, it all sounds logical; but I still don't understand."

She drew him to her. "Poor George," she said with her mouth against his ear. "Poor George, I know only one way to console you, and only one way to console myself." She sighed. "And it seems they will not permit that, I suppose the 'reaction,' she smiled wryly, "would not fit with their plans."

Dolan straightened and looked at her sharply. Her remark had reminded him of something else he needed to know. "How do they

know just when to break us up," he asked, "just when to drop in 'accidentally' on us? Can they read my mind?"

She shook her head. "No, they are not mind-readers. It is just that they know so much about what to expect of people—remember that for thousands of years there has been nothing so important to us as what other people do, in my time men of science no longer study physical things, all that is known, they study people. In any given situation, they can predict quite accurately what action a given individual will take."

"You think they know what we're talking about now?"

"Not in detail. But in general, yes—and I suppose it must serve their purpose in some way for us to worry about these things, what will become of you and me, or they would not permit it. In a matter such as this, they do nothing without a purpose."

"Well, that's fair enough," Dolan said grimly. "As long as they aren't actually mind-readers, they can guess all they want to."

Moirta shook her head. "It is not guessing, that is what I have been trying to tell you. Whatever you plan, they will have foreseen it, perhaps not the exact thing you wish to do; but all the possible things you can do, and the most likely thing you will do.

"Really, it will not be so bad, you will finish the translator, and we will go, and you will forget us, and . . . well, in time I suppose I will forget you also."

"No." He squeezed her hard against him. "I don't intend to forget you, and I don't intend you to

forget me." He grinned down at her. "In this time, the boy always gets the girl, and they live happily ever after. It's a natural law, like gravitation.

"Brown and Smith aren't infallible. They may know people, but I know machines. Don't forget, the time translator is the key, the big item in this mess. And that's in my bailiwick."

DOLAN went back to work. He left it to Brown to satisfy the people at the shop, and apparently Brown satisfied them, they sent along the equipment and supplies he requested without comment.

He still had no idea *why* the time translator worked, but he was beginning to know quite a bit about *how* it worked, in the sense of functional operation, the input/output relations of the black boxes. A time came when he could have activated the machine by making a few minor connections.

He did not do so.

With the knowledge that he had the technical problem whipped, some of his urgency faded. He could take time to amplify and clarify his knowledge. Quite probably the time translator could never be duplicated by twentieth century technology. At the same time, only a fool would pass up a chance to learn what he could, it was too big a thing, even with the limitations under which it seemed to operate. Also, familiarity with the translator was a weapon, knowledge Brown did not have—a weapon he was grimly intent on using.

He kept testing and checking,

varying inputs and measuring outputs.

Remembering what Moirta had said about losing his memory—he did not think he would, if his plans worked out, but there was always the chance of something going wrong—he kept careful notes. Brown watched this activity blandly. Thinking it over, Dolan saw that this was only logical. There were always fires for notes.

So, as an extra precaution, he made copies of the most important data in secrecy and stored them in a glass jar under a rock back of the cottage. Then it occurred to him that he might forget about the jar—or he might not be around to remember it, there was still the gully to keep in mind. Well, what had worked once should work again. He nicked a code message in a piece of wire, showing the location of the notes, and left it in his toolbox.

Also, he made certain changes in the time-machine.

Finally, he told Brown the machine was ready.

"You want to test-hop it?" he asked. "I'm pretty sure it'll work now, but it's still a haywire job, I could be wrong."

Brown shook his head. "Not necessary. If the machine works, we will be . . . home. If not, well, you will just have to tinker with it some more." It was not sound reasoning, from Dolan's viewpoint, but consistent with what he had come to expect from these people in technical matters. He had counted heavily on such a reaction.

"OK," he said. "Then she's ready to go."

Brown nodded and tossed a key

to Smith, speaking curtly in a language strange to Dolan. Dolan had noticed long before that the back bedroom door was always locked, and the windows securely boarded up. Artifacts of historical interest, Brown had told him. It seemed like rather extreme precaution to take for security of such material.

Brown turned back to Dolan. "You had better move your equipment out of range of the machine now, if you wish to keep it," he said.

Dolan carried his equipment outside. When he returned the three aliens were carrying small heavy boxes out of the back room, stowing them in a tight circle about the machine. Moirta was straining at a heavy case with neatly dovetailed corners, marked "Remington".

So that was what it was all about.

It suddenly occurred to him to wonder how, if the machine could not move a person into the future, if it had no real existence in this time, they expected to move guns and ammunition. Did the laws of time operate differently for living organisms and inanimate things? What was it someone had once said about life—"islands of reverse entropy"? But that was only a figure of speech, men were still made up of the same elements as steel and brass—

Well, it could wait, there were more important things right now. "You need a hand?" he asked Moirta.

She smiled and nodded breathlessly.

As he stooped to help lift the box, their heads almost touched.

"Listen!" he whispered, "be on your toes, now. I'm going to try something. Stay on this side of the machine, no matter what happens, and do just as I say."

She looked startled, but nodded.

With four of them working, it did not take long to pile the cargo in place. Brown checked it over with his eye and then turned to study Dolan.

"Well," he said slowly, "I suppose we are ready to go. No doubt you wish your payment now, eh, Mr. Dolan?"

This was the critical point. Dolan tensed as Smith stepped clear and lifted an inquiring eyebrow at Brown, his hand in his hip-pocket; but the senior gun runner shook his head. "Don't be stupid," he said quietly. "I think we have a few negotiations to make now." He looked at Dolan inquiringly.

Dolan hoped his relief did not show too clearly. He had been reasonably sure Brown would be too acute to kill him off-hand, but it had been a tricky moment, just the same. Now, he thought, play it cagey, make them lay it out on the table, get it moving—

"I'm no good at guessing games," he said. "You'll have to come down to my level on this."

Brown nodded. "Of course. Excuse me. I will be more explicit. Mr. Smith wants to kill you and get you out of the way immediately; he does not trust you. I do not trust you completely myself, I do not trust *anyone* completely; and for that exact reason I feel it would be stupid and dangerous to kill you. I am quite sure you will have booby-trapped the machine against just such a contingency."

"Booby-trapped?" Dolan asked blankly.

"Yes," Brown said patiently. "I mean the machine will not work satisfactorily if you are killed. It will blow up, burn out, or some such thing. Is that not true?"

Dolan considered the question for a moment. He was acutely aware that the most devious plot would probably seem simple and childish to a man like Brown. "Suppose it were?" he said cautiously. "Then what?"

"Then we shall negotiate, like reasonable people. What do you need to convince you of our good faith. Your money?" Brown reached in his jacket pocket and brought out a slip of paper. "Here," he said, "I think you will find this satisfactory." He handed it to Dolan.

Dolan looked absently at the check. It was more than satisfactory—for a purely business transaction. But this was no longer just a business transaction.

"It's not enough," he said flatly.

Brown raised an eyebrow. "The girl? No." He shook his head firmly. "We must have Moirta for a hostage, a guarantee of your good faith. She goes with us. Afterward, perhaps, if she wishes to return—" he shrugged.

Dolan studied him, trying to decide just how much Brown's word was worth. Just as much as it suited him to make it worth, probably. He glanced at Moirta. She shook her head, a tiny almost imperceptible jerk, confirming his own thought. There was no particular reason to expect that Brown would really let her return—Moirta probably was not important to him, but the

whereabouts of the time-translator was.

He turned back to Brown. "You'll promise not to stop her?"

Brown smiled indulgently. "I promise." Dolan felt an almost uncontrollable urge to smash the smug smile with his fist. He bottled it up. This was no time to get excited.

"OK," he said shortly. He stepped to the machine and carefully bent a wire just so, while Brown watched alertly.

"Also," Brown said, "the notes."

"Notes?"

"Exactly. The notes you kept on the operation of the machine. Give them to me, please."

Dolan shrugged. He had not really expected to keep the notes. "They're out in my briefcase," he said. Brown looked at Smith, who went out and returned in a moment with the briefcase. Dolan took out a folder and handed it to Brown. Brown riffled through the pages, nodded and tossed the folder on the pile of boxes.

He studied Dolan speculatively. "The other notes, too, please," he said. "The secret notes."

The man was guessing, of course. Dolan had not even mentioned the other notes to Moirta. "You've got all the notes I made," he said.

Brown stepped forward and grasped his arm. "Walk!" he commanded.

Dolan twisted to look at him, startled. "What—?"

"The notes," Brown said coldly. "Walk." He gave a little shove, and Dolan found himself walking, with Brown holding his arm in a firm even grasp, a look of preoccupation on his face.

"This way," Brown said. They went out the door.

"The notes," Brown repeated insistently. "Keep walking, keep walking." They zigzagged rapidly across the yard, Brown still guiding Dolan by the arm, Smith coming behind with his hand in his pocket. Brown paused. "Here, I think," he said to Smith. "Look under that rock."

Dolan watched in helpless rage as Smith dug the jar out and handed it to Brown. *Was* Brown a mind-reader, after all? How else—?

Well, of course, he thought, muscular tension, the old 'mind-reading' trick. He should have caught on sooner; but Brown was good at it, no doubt about that.

Brown smashed the jar against the rock and stuffed the notes in his pocket. They went back in to the time machine.

Brown bent over the control box and studied it carefully. He examined the wire Dolan had adjusted. For the first time, there was a flicker of uncertainty in his eyes.

"Well," he said absently. "I suppose—" he looked comprehensively around, checking the position of the cargo. "There is something—" He punched the power button, moved his hand to start the machine.

Dolan glanced at Moirta. She sat on one of the boxes on the far side of the machine, watching him.

This was the time, *now*—

He stepped forward and opened his mouth to shout.

He never did. Something went suddenly wrong. Brown flicked a thumb, Smith moved like lightning, and before Dolan realized what was happening, he found him-

self flat on his back, wondering numbly what had happened.

Brown snapped a syllable at Moirta. She answered with a shrug and a word. He frowned momentarily and then his face lightened.

"Ah," he said softly. "I think I see, now. You were going to shout to Moirta to run out of range of the machine, while you jumped in and activated it, isn't that so? Really, it would have done no good, we could still have returned, and besides Moirta—" he frowned suddenly. "Oh *could* we have returned?"

He bit delicately at his lower lip. "Moirta," he said. "Step a little closer to the machine, please."

"Now," he turned back to Dolan, "I am going to push the buttons, with Moirta quite close to the machine. Are there any last-minute changes you wish to make?"

Dolan hesitated, studying both Moirta's and the men's positions, and then nodded sullenly.

"I thought there might be," Brown said with satisfaction. "Mr. Smith, help Mr. Dolan up to the machine."

Dolan reached out unsteadily, leaning on Smith, and reversed two connections. "That's it," he mumbled.

"Thank you, Mr. Dolan. Now, Mr. Smith, if you will just carry Mr. Dolan over there into the corner, well away from the machine, and immobilize him—no, no, just temporarily. We may still need him again, Mr. Dolan is a very tricky sort of person."

Dolan felt Smith's fingers touch his neck lightly, there was a sudden blazing pain, and that was all. He blanked out.

THE FIRST thing he knew after that was that fingers were working gently at his neck, massaging it. His head was resting on something soft. He opened his eyes and saw that he was lying with his head pillowed on Moirta's lap.

"George?" she said sharply. "Are you all right, George?"

"I'm all right," he said. He raised his head and looked around. The machine was gone, and Smith and Brown were gone, and half the boxes were gone. The end ones in the little semicircle were broken, and from them a pile of brass cartridges had spilled through the hole in the floor where the others had been.

"Wise jerks," he mumbled with grim satisfaction. "See how they like it now."

Moirta stared at him. "What happened, George? I don't understand what happened."

"I gimmicked the machine. That's what happened. Surprise, huh? I'll bet they were plenty surprised too."

"But I thought—"

Dolan sat up and felt tenderly of his throat. He nodded. "I know," he said. "You thought they had me licked. So did they. That was just smoke-screen, a little diversion. I knew they could out-smart me if I tried to pull anything foxy, that's their trade. But they weren't really mind-readers, you told me that, and the business with the notes cinched it.

"And they didn't think like technicians. They could see I might disable the machine, or booby-trap it; but they couldn't see I could fix it so it would work, only just a little different.

"All I had to do was to keep their minds on their own specialty, let them wear out their suspicion on the little foxy tricks they expected, so they wouldn't notice what I was really doing. See?"

She shook her head. "No," she said. "I do not see. I suppose I'm stupid, too—"

"Not stupid. Just not technically minded. You understand, this machine works by setting up a field around itself, ordinarily that field's circular, it takes in everything in a certain radius. But it doesn't have to be, that's just because it's the easiest way, more convenient. So I just distorted the field a little, made it lopsided. Then I went through all that other business to keep their minds on me, keep them off your position, and make sure they both stayed over on my side." He smiled at her. "I told you, remember, in this time the villains always get it in the neck, the boy gets the girl, and they live happily ever after."

She shook her head. "No," she said gently. "I'm sorry, for you and me there will not be any ever after. You forget the displacement effect."

"Displacement effect?"

"Yes," she said. "I am afraid I did not explain that fully to you, I thought it would only hurt you to do so. You understand, the past is really immutable, we only seem to change it. For the time that the time-translator exists at any given time in the past, a sort of enclave, a self-supporting bubble, is established which permits apparent changes. When the time translator returns to its normal existence in my era, that bubble dissolves. I do not know, in terms of our present

subjective time, just how long the displacement will hold, but when it vanishes we, you and I, will no longer exist."

"But that would be a change in the past, in itself."

"Not exactly. What I told you about forgetting was true, it was just not the whole truth. There will be, in my time, a Moirta who exists normally up to the time she is translated to the past. And there will be, in your time, a George Dolan who never met Mr. Brown or Miss Jones. But you and I, as we exist at this moment, will not have been."

"I see," Dolan said. "It's too bad I didn't know about this sooner. I think we still may have a chance, though. You see, I had to worry about the possibility that Smith and Brown might think it worth while to come back after you. So I changed the switches, too. The time translator isn't going into the future, it's gone into the past, and then it's fixed to burn out again, a long way in the past, where there aren't any electronics technicians, no people at all. How about that?"

"The past? I don't know," she said doubtfully. "I am not a temporal technician, I know only about the displacement effect as it operates in our usual translations. Perhaps, in that case, the bubble might continue to exist, as a sort of permanent side-track. I really don't know."

She laughed suddenly, as the full implications of what he had said struck her. "The past? Oh, poor Smith. And poor Brown. A long way in the past, where there are no people at all, just dinosaurs and snakes—and they hate such things

so." She laughed helplessly, tears rolling down her cheeks. "And poor George, and poor Moirta. All with their clever little plans, their tricks to outsmart each other. Everyone has outsmarted everyone else, and we all lose now, don't we?"

Dolan stared at her narrowly. "We *all* lose?"

She nodded—

THE SENIOR gun runner had been quite confident of victory.

It took him a rather long moment to assimilate the fact of defeat; but in that moment he did assimilate it, as fully and completely as he took in the implications of any other situation.

He examined the wreckage of the time translator curiously, tried and failed to make sense of the erratic pattern in which their cargo had accompanied them, the absence of Moirta. He straightened and looked about. There were no dinosaurs, the range of the time machine did not extend that far; but over on a ledge of rock a large cat with hyper-trophied eyeteeth squatted, switching its stub of a tail, startled by their sudden appearance.

He sighed and turned toward the other gun runner. "Old, old, time," he said. He nodded toward the cat. "Bad for us. No chance rescue. Supplies short."

The other said nothing, watching him narrowly, hand in back pocket. Down in the valley below, something trumpeted, a hoarse grunting roar. The senior gun runner started nervously. It was getting dark.

He held out his hand. "Older

first," he said simply. The younger man laid the gun in his hand; and the senior gun runner, without hesitation or farewell, raised it to his head and pulled the trigger.

"—yes, everyone," Moirta said. She wiped at her eyes. "I'm sorry, George. I will die very quickly in this time, whether the displacement operates or not."

"But you said—!"

"I know. I was so sure there was nothing you could do, and I said what I thought would make you happy. And I did want to stay with you, in a way, even though I knew it would kill me . . . and in another way, I wanted to go back, to return to my own time, and you were my means to that . . . oh, it's so mixed up, really, it is funny, everyone so sure of themselves, and now . . . this . . ."

Dolan shook his head helplessly. "I never thought. You seemed so . . . so . . ."

"So human?" her lips curled wryly. "I was *made* to seem human, twentieth-century human, it was part of my job. I'm not. And soon, I shall not even seem human, without the things I need—things that won't even be invented for ten thousand years—cancer inhibitors, blood clotting agents, insulin surrogate, vaccines, serums, antibiotics—why, I can't even eat your food!" She shook her head sadly. "You had better just leave me, it will not be nice, you will not like me at all."

And yet, even with the game played out, she could not forget her trade, her specialty, for it was bred into her as deeply as the tendency to leukemia, the hemophilia, the

(Continued on page 118)

What Is Your Science I. Q.?

HERE'S ANOTHER QUIZ that will test you knowledge of things astronomical and other similar items you run across all the time in science fiction. How well do you know them? Counting five for each correct answer, you should score 60. Anything over 75 and you're a whizz. See page 116 for the answers.

1. Who is given credit for the discovery of Uranus?
2. Alnilam, Alnitak, Mintaka are in the constellation _____.
3. Sirius is the brightest star in our heavens and is _____ light years away.
4. Which of the two moons of Mars goes around that planet in 7.5 hours?
5. The instrument used for measuring the sun's heat and energy is called a _____.
6. Who first coined the word robot?
7. Magnitude refers to the brightness of a star. The brighter the star the _____ its magnitude.
8. Venus and _____ are known as the inferior or inner planets.
9. Thuban was once the North star; Polaris is the North star today. Which star will be the North star about twelve thousand years from now?
10. The "cool" stars are yellowish; the "coolest" are _____.
11. How thick are the rings of Saturn thought to be?
12. The idea that the growth of planets is attained by the aggregation of small solid meteoric bodies revolving around a gaseous nucleus is called the _____ hypothesis.
13. What is the name of the most recently detected moon of Uranus?
14. When a planet crosses in front of the sun as viewed from Earth it is called a _____.
15. The three outer moons of Jupiter are noted as the only satellites that go around a planet _____.
16. Bode's Law was based on the regular _____ of the planets.
17. Supergiant stars which are yellow in color and are variables are called _____.
18. Those objects in the heavens which are not stars are usually designated as M42 or M38 etc. What does the M stand for?
19. The faintest stars still visible to the naked eye are usually of the _____ magnitude.
20. The great tongues of incandescent hydrogen which spurt outward from the sun are called _____.

It's much easier to believe than disbelieve,

whether it's a truth or an untruth, when you have to.

And when the brain and body are weak . . .

A Cold Night for Crying

BY MILTON LESSER

THE SNOW sifted silently down, clouds of white confetti in the glare of the street lamps, mantling the streets with white, spilling softly from laden, wind-stirred branches, drifting with the wind and embanking the scars and stumps of buildings that remained of what had been the city.

Mr. Friedlander trudged across the wide, quiet avenues, his bare, balding head burrowed low in his tattered collar for warmth, chin against chest, wet feet numb and stinging with cold inside his torn overshoes which could not be replaced until next winter, and then only if the Karadi did not decrease the clothing ration still further.

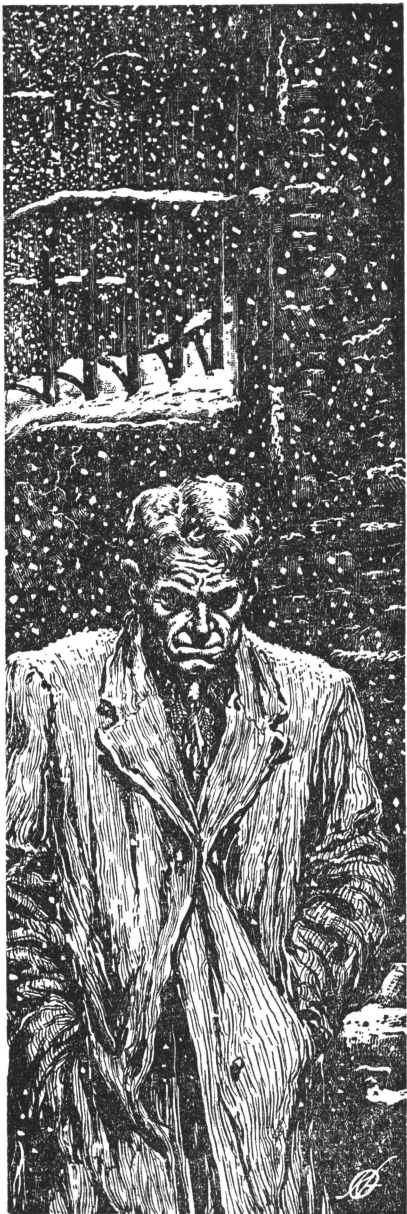
All the way home, he conjured fantasies from the white, multi-shaped exhalations of his breath.

Here it was the smoke of a good Havana-rolled cigar and there the warm hissing steam from a radiator valve and later the magic-carpet clouds from the funnel of an ocean liner that might take him to far, warm places the Karadi had not reached. Almost, he thought he heard the great sonorous drone of the ship's whistle, but it was the toot of an automobile horn as the sleek vehicle came skidding around a corner, almost running down Mr. Friedlander before it disappeared in the swirling flurries of snow. He thought if he followed the tire tracks before the snow could cover them he would discover in which section of the city these particular Karadi lived, but he shook his fist instead, knowing the gesture would bring, at worst, a reprimand.

In the dim hallway of his tenement, smelling pungently of cabbage and turnips—and from somewhere way in back the faint, unmistakable aroma of beef—Mr. Friedlander shook the snow from his coat and stamped his numb feet before he climbed the three dark flights to his apartment. At each landing he would pause and look with longing and resentment at the door of the unused elevator shaft, then shrug and wonder why the Karadi had denied man even this simple luxury.

On the floor below his own, Mr. Friedlander heard the unmistakable crackling sound of a short-wave radio receiver. The fools! He wasn't going to talk, he lost no love on the Karadi. But there were others. There were neighbors, friends, brothers, even wives, there were the obvious quislings you shunned and the less obvious ones you didn't suspect until it was too late. One thing you never did was listen to the short-wave radio so defiantly its crackling could be heard not merely on the other side of the door but all the way out on the landing. The punishment was death.

Mr. Friedlander paused in front of his own door, where the odor of strong yellow turnips assailed his nostrils. It was so unsatisfyingly familiar, he almost gagged. The new generation hardly remembered the delightful old foods, but if Mr. Friedlander shut his eyes and thought, he could clearly smell steak and roast chicken and broiled lobster swimming in butter and a dry red wine to wash everything down slowly, so slowly he could taste every tiny morsel.



Illustrated by Kelly Freas

He pushed open the door and began to shrug off his worn coat. "I'm home," he said to the scabby walls, the gas range which had been converted to wood when the Karadi suspended all public utilities, to the bubbling pot which exuded the turnip smell, to the drab sofa, the two wooden chairs, the table he had constructed from two old saw horses and the planking he had found long ago after the Fourteenth Street Bomb.

From the small bedroom, he heard sobbing.

MRS. FRIEDLANDER blinked red-rimmed eyes at him and squeezed his hand, wringing it as if it had been a wet rag. She was forty-four years old, six years younger than Mr. Friedlander, with a face which once had been comely but now was lined, gaunt and big-pored. She was even thinner than Mr. Friedlander, but looked shapeless in her thick woolen sweater and the baggy work trousers he had stolen from the quartermaster store of the plant where he worked.

"Try to tell me, Martha," he said. "It's good to talk."

She looked at him mutely, opening her mouth to talk but swallowing instead.

"You tell me, Martha. There now."

She managed to get the words out. "It's Freddie."

Mr. Friedlander placed a tired arm about her shoulder. The feeling had started in the pit of his stomach, like when their son George had died of pneumonia two years ago this month. The Karadi had outlawed all wonder drugs, all

hospitals, all medical schools. Helpless, they had watched George die, his big child eyes not understanding, asking for help. Mr. Friedlander always wondered if he had died hating them.

"People die and you see them. You know," Mrs. Friedlander said. "They are sick and you can't do anything but try to nurse them, anyway. Or the big Karadi cars run them down and you see the broken body. You see them. Alive. Then dead. It's hard, so hard you want to stop living too, but there's God and God shows you they are dead and you have the memories, all the sweet ones. You know they're dead because you see them dying. You can forget. In time, you forget. You have to forget because otherwise you don't want to live, but you . . . hold me. Hold me tight."

Mr. Friedlander patted her hair awkwardly. The Karadi not only condoned but encouraged displays of simple emotion and for that reason Mr. Friedlander tried to avoid them. "What are you trying to tell me?" he asked.

"Freddie. Freddie. His plane was shot down over the mountains, they told me. Freddie is dead. Freddie."

Mr. Friedlander stopped patting his wife's hair, stopped stroking the tangles into a smooth glossiness. He bent down and carefully unbuckled his torn overshoes, placing them carefully in a corner of the room. Then he walked to the window and stared out at the snow sparkling in wind-blown puffs under the street lamp which remained only because the Karadi liked to drive their confiscated autos at night. "What are you saying?" he asked his wife.

"Just because they tell us Freddie is dead—"

"Stop it. Don't say that."

"Freddie is dead. Because they tell us, that's no reason to believe. How can we believe? We saw Freddie alive, but now they tell us Freddie is dead. Far away, two thousand miles. Over the mountains. Did we see him die? He's dead. Oh, he's dead. But we'll never learn to live with it. Don't you see? How can we believe? How can we know? We saw him alive. Now he's dead."

Freddie was flying a Karadi plane against the last strongholds of free man in the Rocky Mountains. Not because Freddie had wanted to pilot the dart-swift craft particularly, but because they had made him. The Karadi announced their own human losses readily, almost as if they took great pleasure in the impressive figures. "They told you this?" Mr. Friedlander asked.

"That Freddie's plane was shot down. That he is assumed dead."

"You saw nothing in writing?"

"They sent a man."

"You knew him?"

"No. He wore good clothing. He drove up in a sleek Karadi car."

"Quisling."

"Freddie died a hero's death, he said. Against the rebels."

"Rebels? Trying to preserve their own freedom? Freedom which we lost because the bombed cities couldn't survive?"

"I only know what the man told me, but how can we . . . how . . . all my life, always, forever, I will be praying and waiting for Freddie to walk in, right behind you, through that door. We never saw

him die. They should at least send something. Some proof. Anything to make me understand he is dead."

Mr. Friedlander had been thinking the same thing. If you loved someone, your son, all his life and then a stranger came and said he was dead you could forget the stranger came and go on thinking of that someone, your son, alive and not dead, but too busy to come and see you, eating the food you could only dream about, sleeping in a warm bed, in some clean place far away. Only it was like the cat he once had read about. You took the cat and gave it food, catnip, but every time it ate you also fed it electricity, a shock. It wanted to eat but it was afraid of the electricity, the shock. It starved to death screeching from hunger in a room full of food. If that was what the Karadi wanted, he would say Freddie was dead. He would believe and laugh everytime he saw them because they thought he was screeching from hunger in a room full of food.

"Stop it," Mr. Friedlander told his wife. "You stop that. If they say so, then Freddie is dead. We must put an announcement in the Karadi newspaper and make plans for a funeral."

"In all this snow? It's so cold."

"Anyway."

Mrs. Friedlander walked to the stove and stirred the bubbling turnip water. "You come and eat your supper," she said. "We'll talk about Freddie later."

"There's nothing to talk about. Only the funeral."

"Maybe he was lying. The stranger."

"Stop that. It's what they want.

They want us to be animals. They want us never to know. Always doubting. Always clean in dirty places, working hard, using all our energy to be only a little better than animals. Every time you see a Karadi, you won't hate him. You'll think maybe he's going to tell you some good news about Freddie. It was all a mistake. They want that, too. They feed on our sorrow and despair and confusion. There is a word for them and their invasion and why they are here. They don't need us, our resources. They feed on what we feel. They are a— a sadistic fungi."

"Fred! Eat your supper and you'll feel better. You must be half frozen."

"It's warmer in here."

Mrs. Friedlander shivered, although she stood near the stove. "It's still cold. I hope it's warm where Freddie is."

He slapped her and was glad when she cried, then sorry, then glad again when she came into his arms, sobbing. They would make funeral arrangements in the morning.

After supper a man from the Karadi newspaper visited them. He wore a new overcoat and shining plastic overshoes and a bright scarf of red wool around his neck. His face was plump, his cheeks rosy, his well-groomed hair smelling of some expensive perfume when he removed hat and earlaps.

"Mr. and Mrs. Friedlander," he said, his voice like the dimly remembered taste of pure maple syrup, "I bring you the heartfelt sympathies of the Karadi Newspaper. If it is any consolation, know that your son, Freddie Friedlander,

Jr., died a hero's death against the barbarians of the mountains." His nose was running with the cold; he padded it daintily with a pale blue silk handkerchief. He offered Mr. Friedlander a small, dry-crackling cigar, took one himself and touched flame to them with a monogrammed lighter. Mr. Friedlander inhaled gratefully, allowing the unfamiliar smoke to sear his lungs painfully before he exhaled a long blue plume at the ceiling. For Mrs. Friedlander the man from the Karadi Newspaper had a small box of candy, the chocolate frozen over with powdery white but, by the expression on Mrs. Friedlander's face, succulent nevertheless.

"At times like this," the man from the Karadi Newspaper said after he had politely refused what was left of the yellow turnip mash, "it is customary to place an ad in the newspaper in memory of the departed. The cost, in such cases, is quite reasonable—benevolent, you might say. Seven days of overtime for Mr. Friedlander."

"But," said Mrs. Friedlander, "if we place the announcement in the Karadi Newspaper, don't you see? We are admitting Freddie is dead."

The man from the Karadi Newspaper cocked an eyebrow in practiced surprise. "He is quite dead, Mrs. Friedlander."

"What my wife means is that, well, we didn't see him die."

"Then you don't believe the Karadi?"

"That's not it at all," said Mr. Friedlander. "If Freddie is dead, it is unhealthy not to believe. We want to believe. We find it difficult."

"I understand," the man said.

"I would suggest a large ad in that case. Two weeks overtime, Mr. Friedlander. Write it yourself. Don't use any of the forms. Write it from your heart, from what you feel deep inside."

"I suppose that is best," Mr. Friedlander admitted, secretly amazed at his own objective reaction to his son's passing. The sorrow would come later, he told himself. The grief, when it came, would be good. It would wash them clean so they could live again. Even at the funeral. He guessed, they would walk slowly with measured tread and be sad, but they would expect Freddie to join them in their sadness, as if it were a funeral but not his funeral at all. Mr. Friedlander was about to tell this to the man from the Karadi Newspaper because he thought it was a great truth and he had discovered it, when there was a knock on the door.

It was Mr. Davidson from downstairs on the second floor, a small old man, just bones and clothing and a high voice, who lived alone in the apartment where his wife had died four years before of old age. It was said the Karadi wanted old men like Mr. Davidson to go on living because they were unproductive and had to be cared for by younger people who could hardly make ends meet, thus lowering the standard of living. Everyone in the tenement took turns inviting Mr. Davidson in for dinner.

"Beautiful snow, isn't it?" Mr. Davidson demanded, puckering his dry lips in a toothless grin. "Have you heard about Freddie? Have you heard the news?"

He seemed spitefully cheerful,

Mr. Friedlander thought. Happy because he had outlived a man two generations his junior? If, indeed, it was such a case of sadistic glee—so like the Karadi themselves—Mr. Friedlander made a mental note to stop inviting the old man to share their dinner.

"Yes, sir, great news," chirped Mr. Davidson. Then: "Who's your friend?"

"He's from the Karadi Newspaper," Mrs. Friedlander explained. "Here to see about placing an announcement in the paper."

"Damned quisling," spat Mr. Davidson. The old folks certainly had privileges. That remark would mean a month of overtime for Mr. Friedlander, who turned earthenware kitchen pots on an archaic wheel. All it earned Mr. Davidson was a scowl from the man from the Karadi Newspaper.

"What great news are you talking about?" the man wanted to know.

"Great news? Who said anything about great news? Why don't you mind your own business, anyway?"

"You said it, old man. Great news, you said. I want to know."

"Maybe I did and maybe I didn't."

"You did."

"Don't always remember. Just what were we talking about? Freddie Friedlander, wasn't it?"

"Yes."

"Like I said, great news. We all don't get to die a hero's death. No, sir. Lookit me, now. Die in bed one of these nights, just like that." Claw-like fingers snapped and made a singularly dry sound. "Who'll care? Who'll know until I

don't show up for dinner one night? Great news. Great thing to die a hero's death, I always say."

The man from the Karadi Newspaper smiled. "I certainly misunderstood you, old timer. I like your attitude. If the boy is dead, let's look at the bright side of the picture."

All at once, Mrs. Friedlander wailed Freddie's name and cupped her face in coarse, work-hardened hands. "Freddie's dead," she sobbed. "Dead, dead, dead . . ."

Mr. Friedlander gulped and turned away. If he touched her now he would break down too. He plopped a fork in the turnip mash and made little tracks with the tines, criss-crossing them like the tracks in the deserted railroad yards down by the river.

"You see," the man from the Karadi Newspaper said, "that's exactly what I said. The announcement is good for you. Let other people know about Freddie and you'll be able to live with your terrible loss. This man has been very helpful."

"Please," Mr. Friedlander told him. "Not now."

"But now is exactly the time." The man explored through his pockets and found an announcement blank for Mr. Friedlander, a stiff yellow sheet of paper folded over crisply three times, with words printed in upper case letters and many blank lines to be filled in. Mr. Friedlander read it, handed it back to the man from the Karadi Newspaper, who then asked questions and filled in the blanks with a precise hand as Mr. Friedlander answered him.

The man stood up, giving Mr.

Friedlander another small cigar and giving two of them to Mr. Davidson. "Karadi blessings on you," he said. "You'll be notified at work about your overtime, Mr. Friedlander."

"When will we see it in the newspaper?"

"Tomorrow. Afternoon edition. Karadi blessings."

The man was gone.

THERE," said Mr. Friedlander. "Go ahead and cry. It will do you good. Cry all you want."

"Young jackass," muttered Mr. Davidson. "Thought he'd never leave. And don't you cry, young lady. Laugh. Sing. Jump for joy. I couldn't tell you the great news about Freddie while that man was here."

"We heard about Freddie," Mr. Friedlander said in a chill voice. "Will you please go downstairs?"

"You heard baloney, or you wouldn't be talking like that. Freddie ain't dead."

"What did you say?" Mr. Friedlander stood perfectly still, in the center of the room, his back to the stove, trying to peer through the window which by now had frosted over. Mrs. Friedlander had stopped her crying, hands clasped in front of her, below her waist, in an obsequious Oriental pose which the Karadi promoted.

"I said Freddie ain't dead."

"What are you talking about?"

"Heard it on the short-wave, by God. Wouldn't kid about a thing like this. I came busting in here to tell you, only that quissing was here and I had to wait."

"You mean it's you who owns

the short-wave set downstairs?" demanded Mr. Friedlander. "I never stopped on the landing. I always ran upstairs. You see, I didn't want to know who owned the short-wave, who listened to the—"

"The free radio, other side of the Rockies? Go ahead, say it. Listen to me, Mr. Friedlander. Those Karadi ain't here to stay. If you stopped to think of it a minute, you'd understand like the rest of us."

"The rest of you?"

"Well, a lot of us, anyway. They don't need us. We have nothing they want. They enjoy making us knuckle under, is all. Something in their makeup, I don't know what. They won't stay here forever, though some of us won't be around long enough to see them go."

"What's all that got to do with . . . ?"

"With Freddie and the short-wave? He's been captured, Mr. Friedlander! By the free folk. He's on their side now, the side all of us want to be on but can't be. He's alive, you understand?"

"You wouldn't just be saying this? You're sure?"

"Wouldn't you trust the word of your own people, the people who saw him come down by parachute, who took him in, got his name and beamed it back here so you, his folks, wouldn't have to worry none? Well, wouldn't you?"

"Yes!" Mrs. Friedlander cried in a tremulous voice. "Oh, yes . . ."

"Sensible girl," said Mr. Davidson.

Walking to the window and wiping away a circle of frost with his hand, Mr. Friedlander felt a spring

in his step he hadn't felt for twenty years, since the day the Karadi came swooping down from space and caught the world in a tired breathing spell in World War III. Freddie was alive—and safe. Freddie was free. He must tell everyone. He must shout it now, to all the neighbors, and shout it again at work tomorrow, and withdraw his announcement from the Karadi Newspaper and a hundred other things. He lifted the warped window, with cardboard replacing two of the shattered panes, and breathed in the crisp, cold night air. "I'll visit the newspaper in the morning," he said. "Tell them to forget all about the announcement." He turned around and faced his wife and Mr. Davidson. "What are you crying for? Stop crying."

"I'm so happy, Fred."

"Maybe I can get down to the newspaper now and see their night man."

"Hold on there," Mr. Davidson said. "Are you crazy or something, young feller? Want to fit the noose around my neck yourself? Not just me, but all the others. Think I'm the only one? There's Mr. and Mrs. Peters, and the Schwartz's, the McDonalds, the Kopaks. You're just slow catching on, that's all."

"You mean they all have short-waves, all those people?"

"That's exactly what I mean. We have to find freedom our own way. Oh, we conform. We cry when we're supposed to, and laugh. But at night we listen to the radio and learn some of the truth, so that when the Karadi get bored with us and decide to leave, we can take our places in a free world.

Took me two years to build that short-wave out of spare parts, but it was worth every minute."

"What do you do when they come around hunting?" Mr. Friedlander asked.

"Hide it, of course. Son, you're afraid of your own shadow."

"I am not. I just didn't know."

"For a time we were worried about you. Thought maybe you was a quisling. Now I had to take the chance. I just had to tell you. Listen, here's the thing. Here's what we'll do. We'll let the announcement stick in the paper. Got to make them think we believe. Then we'll have ourselves a real solemn funeral out to the graveyard near 92nd Street. Know a preacher who'll wring every last tear out of all of us. I mean all. We'll all go. The Kopaks, the Schwartz's, the Peters, everyone who heard in on the short-wave about Freddie and how he's alive and everything. The sadder we look, the happier we'll feel later on. Then we'll have ourselves a real old fashioned celebration, like before the Karadi came. Mr. McDonald says he has a bottle of real champagne he was saving for when his girl Betty got married, but I talked him into letting us use it. Son, we'll pull out all the stops. Of course, you can't really get looped on an ounce or so of champagne, but we sure can try! Well, see you at the funeral."

And Mr. Davidson went downstairs, cackling and whistling the dirge from Beethoven's *Eroica*.

"Well," said Mr. Friedlander to his wife, "what do you think?"

"I think it's wonderful. That nice man, going to all that trouble."

"I'm not so sure. What do we know about Mr. Davidson? Maybe he's lying. Maybe he's—"

"He wouldn't lie, not about a thing like that."

"I know how you feel. I felt that way at first, too. Free and—well, relaxed for the first time in so long I can't remember. But then I got to thinking. What if he's senile? What if he imagined the whole thing? It would be a sin to celebrate, with Freddie dead."

"We could ask Mr. Peters, or the others. And Freddie's not dead!"

"That's what you want to believe. It's what I want to believe, too." Mr. Friedlander walked to the window again, where the pane was frosting over once more, giving a ghostlike quality to the street, the lamps, the facades of the other tenements, the snow-laden trees outside. He wanted to believe. But he had wanted to believe, in his youth, that the killing war would one day end. When it did, the Karadi had come, with talk of peace—although with their invincible weapons they had disarmed all the world's armies and, instead of rebuilding, had made a shambles of our civilization. Every day the Karadi told lies and told you to believe. And planted spies to see that you did. And visited you at unexpected moments to see that you conformed. And trained your children to fight against free people, free people who they said were your enemies. And gave extra clothing rations to a spy, to a believer, to a man in the Karadi image.

"We can't ask the others," Mr. Friedlander said. "What if Mr. Davidson was lying, or making it

all up? You can't go around talking about short-waves and things. It isn't safe."

"We have to know!"

"Do you want to be turned in as an undesirable? Is that what you want? We already know. The Karadi told us." The more he spoke, the easier it was to convince himself. You couldn't live with doubt. The Karadi fostered doubt and taught you that: you had to avoid it. You had to know. This is so, this is not so—if this other thing may or may not be so, I don't want to talk about it. Alternative A or alternative B. Simple. Concise. What did old Mr. Davidson know, anyway, listening to his subversive radio? Why should the barbarians in the mountains tell the truth any more than the Karadi or their agents? The barbarians are our enemies. It's propaganda. Maybe Mr. Davidson is a saboteur for them.

"Is that clear?" Mr. Friedlander demanded. "Is that quite, quite clear? Cry if you want. Freddie is dead. Freddie is dead. Dead. You can't believe all the wild stories you hear."

Mrs. Friedlander was smiling at him through her tears, wiping them away, assuming again the Oriental pose. "You believe what you want," she said. "We won't celebrate. We won't pretend. We'll say Freddie is dead. But I'll believe—what I believe. And I'm thankful to Mr. Davidson."

"So you can live in doubt all the rest of your life? For that you're thankful?"

"I'm thankful for a crumb when I expected nothing. Where are you going?"

Mr. Friedlander was buckling his worn overcoat and forcing his shoes into wet overshoes. "Out for a walk," he said. "I want to think."

"It's a cold night."

"I don't care."

OUTSIDE, with the snow still falling, drifting down in unhurried silence, he found himself hating Mr. Davidson. The man should have minded his own business. Old meddler. He was a menace to the community, too. Whose side was he on, anyway? A senile old man? An agent provocateur for the barbarians in the western mountains? Was his self-appointed mission in life to see to it that people like poor Mrs. Friedlander never knew another moment of peace all the rest of their lives?

The short-wave radio—all lies. It had to be lies. If it weren't lies you could understand nothing. Black is white or white is black. Everyone saying something else. You don't know. You never know.

He didn't want to start any trouble. He wasn't looking for trouble. He was only a good, Karadi-fearing citizen who knew his place. But Mr. Davidson had made a revelation to him. If all the others, if all those people Mr. Davidson had named, chuckling over each name, taking secret delight in each one as if he, the patriarch of the tenement had converted them, one at a time or in groups, into clandestine outlaws, if all those people were subversive, thought Mr. Friedlander, why should he suffer along with them? Was it fair that he received the same inadequate food, the same squalid lodging, the same

menial jobs to perform? He knew his place.

But they had told him about Freddie—or Mr. Davidson, their spokesman, had—and he owed them something for that, for the one brief moment in which they had shoved back the snow, the grim cold winter, the bleak building and the smell of turnips, as a curtain, and revealed his own youth to him, sparkling with hope, with promise, with a life unfulfilled.

No!

Even that had been unkind. Pre-meditated? His lot would be all the more unpleasant for it. And Mrs.

Friedlander's. They'd sealed her in a half-mourning, half-hoping future. They'd ruined her whole life.

He'd have to move, of course, with his wife. But perhaps they'd earn the right to a better neighborhood. He walked up the six snow-covered steps to the police station, went inside, sat down and started telling the uniformed figure at the desk about the subversives in his building who owned short-wave radios, starting with Mr. Davidson and going right on down the list. He hoped the Karadi would come and take them away before the funeral. . . .

AND GONE TOMORROW *(Continued from page 49)*

I'll join 'em. Why—why die a martyr's death?"

Of course, Jay told himself. Logical. But Kevin had been so convinced. So utterly sure. Now he looked and sounded like a disillusioned old man.

"Kevin, I'm not trying to rub it in. But—"

"I know what you're going to say. I was so sure. Paradise. I was a firm disciple. Convinced. I believed in all of it. I—thought it would last forever. The perfect government. A permanently *workable* government."

Jay sat quietly. Ilaria reached for the switch.

"For God's sake," came the voice of 1954, "what is the perfect workable government?"

Ilaria closed the switch and the light blinded Jay. He felt as if someone had slugged him in the

stomach. Slowly the machine prepared to send him back one-hundred years. It warmed up like a jet on a runway.

The light faded and Jay opened his eyes. The building rocked. There was a terrific explosion and part of the steel wall buckled. Somewhere a woman screamed. A squadron of fighters hurtled past, spitting fire and death. A bomber fell, exploding as it crashed into a tall apartment building. Jay's stomach twisted and he knew he was on his way. Ilaria took his gun from his holster and calmly placed its ugly snout against his own face.

". . . the perfect workable government?" Jay's question of a moment ago reached his ears as he began to slip back, minute by minute, picking up momentum. Ilaria's reply came dimly.

"There is none." . . .



LES MACHINES

There are human beings who function “like machines” and there are machines which seem to be “almost human”. So—the problem in this case was not murder, or who committed it but who was the “machine” and who was the “human being”.

BY JOE LOVE

ON JANUARY 5, 1997 Isobel Smith became Isobel Smith d’Larte. On November 13, 1997 Isobel Smith d’Larte gave birth to a boy-child who died. And on March 20, 1998 Isobel Smith d’Larte was placed on trial for the willful and premeditated murder of her husband Arnaud d’Larte.

“Not Isobel,” said her friends. “Not Isobel. Too mousey. So quiet. Surely it wasn’t Isobel.”

“But it’s the quiet type you’ve got to watch out for,” said others. “Probably has a lover somewhere. She was younger than her husband you know. Much younger. Too much younger.”

"Killed him for his money," said the people on the street. "Read where she likes art and museums, stuff like that. Must be a queer one that Isobel d'Larte."

The accusations piled high against Isobel, but she said nothing. She sat in court, a tiny figure in black saying nothing, seemingly not even listening to the accusations of the Prosecutor.

"We will prove willful and premeditated murder," the Prosecutor thundered.

"Easily done," an old woman in the audience murmured spitefully. "Young wife, old husband. Rich husband. Murder! Easily proved."

"First witness," the Prosecutor called. "Sergeant Melot."

Sergeant Melot took the stand. The witness chair creaked under his weight. He answered a loud, "I do," when the clerk swore him in.

"Tell us about finding the body," the Prosecutor said. "Miss no details."

"A Mrs. Watson, servant of Arnaud d'Larte, called us at nine five P.M. on March 15. Her master was dead, she said. When we answered her call we found Mr. d'Larte's body in his bedroom. He had been dead for about an hour."

"The cause?"

"Beaten to death. Beaten with an iron statue of Venus. Evidence of a struggle. Twenty wounds on his head."

"Twenty wounds, Sergeant Melot?"

"Twenty. The first, or second, would have been enough to kill him. But there were twenty."

The audience gasped and the Prosecutor smiled. "And where was Mrs. d'Larte?" he asked.

"Locked in her bedroom. Had to break the door down to get to her."

"Did you speak to her?"

"We spoke to her, but she didn't speak to us."

The audience laughed and the judge rapped for silence.

"The iron statue of Venus, the one found near Mr. d'Larte's body, you found fingerprints on it, did you not?" Sergeant Melot nodded. "Whose fingerprints were they, Sergeant Melot?"

"Mrs. d'Larte's."

"Your witness," the Prosecutor told the Defense.

"No questions," said the Defense.

"Why ask questions," a spectator commented. "She's guilty."

"Next witness."

"Mrs. Abby Watson to the stand please."

Abby Watson strode to the witness chair. Her shrew-like eyes flicked sharply towards Isobel d'Larte then away. Her answer to the clerk who swore her in was sharp and positive.

"How long have you worked for Mr. d'Larte?" the Prosecutor asked.

"Fifteen years."

"In your opinion Mr. d'Larte was a good employer?"

"The best. A wonderful man, but a lonely one. That woman tricked him into marriage. Played on his loneliness."

"Objection."

"Objection sustained. Confine yourself to the questions please."

"Mr. d'Larte was older than his wife?" the Prosecutor asked.

"Eighteen years older."

"Was it a happy marriage?"

"At first, at least on his part. He was contented, but she seemed

restless. Always wanted to go to museums and see paintings, or playing her silly antique records all day. Not content with the government 'Do-It-Yourself' kits. Called them mechanical and expressionless. She insulted Mr. d'Larte's friends time and again. Called them frauds. Said their paintings, books and plays were terrible. Said that real talent was dead.

"You said she spent a lot of time in museums?"

"I didn't say it, but she did. Every chance she got. She'd be gone for hours."

"Which museum? The one commemorating the wars? The Museum of Mechanics?"

"None of those. She'd go to the old one on the hill. That horrible thing with the relics of the past in it. The one run by the robots. The one run by the government to remind us of the past when only a few were allowed talent and not everybody like today. But I think she went to the museum for another reason. No one could *really* be interested in those things they have there."

"What do you think she went for, Mrs. Watson?"

"To meet her lover. Shortly before he was killed Mr. d'Larte confessed to me that he was of the same opinion."

"See, I told you she had a lover," someone whispered. "Old husband, young wife. I just knew there was a lover."

"Objection," said the Defense. "There is no proof that Mrs. d'Larte went to the museum to meet a lover. There are only opinions, guesses."

"If your honor will permit me

to call my next witness I think I can prove that there was a lover," the Prosecutor said.

The judge leaned forward in eager anticipation. "Call your witness."

"Bella Whychek."

A fat, dumpy, flame-haired woman made her way to the witness stand. As she was sworn in she tugged self-consciously at her too tight girdle.

"Miss Whychek—"

"Mrs. . . . I'm a widow."

"Mrs. Whychek, would you tell us where you are employed?"

"Timon's and Sons. I'm a secretary there."

"And where is your office located?"

"In the building just across the street from the Museum of the Past—the one you were just talking about to that other woman."

"Mrs. Whychek, do you recognize the woman sitting over there?" the Prosecutor asked as he pointed to Isobel d'Larte.

"Indeed I do. I saw her most everyday."

"Would you tell us the circumstances?"

"Well, from the window in my office I have a very good view of the park that is next to the museum. About a month ago I began noticing that woman in the park. I couldn't help but notice her, she came so often."

"Alone, Mrs. Whychek?"

"At first yes. She'd go into the museum, stay about two hours or so, then come out and sit in the park. She never did anything but sit."

"Was she always alone?"

"I was just coming to that. After

about a week I noticed that a man would come and sit with her in the park."

"Could you describe the man?"

"No, I'm afraid I couldn't. He always wore a long overcoat and a hat pulled down over his face. Both the overcoat and the hat were very old though. I did notice that. They looked like they might have dated from around 1950."

"And what did this man and Mrs. d'Larte do in the park?"

"Just sat. Talked I guess. I never saw them kiss or anything if that's what you mean. Of course many times they would still be sitting there when I left work. What they did after that I don't know."

"But Mrs. d'Larte definitely did meet a man in the park."

"Oh, yes. She met him nearly every day for almost a month."

"Thank you. Your witness."

The Defense rose slowly and walked over to where Mrs. Whychek sat.

"Remember you are under oath, Mrs. Whychek," he said. "You say Mrs. d'Larte and this man merely sat and talked?"

"As far as I could tell that's all they did. Of course I didn't watch them every minute."

"Then you can say that they never did anything out of the way, that their meetings, if they were that, were innocent?"

"As far as I could tell they were."

"Could you say whether the meetings were prearranged?"

"I really couldn't, but—"

"That will be all, thank you," the Defense interrupted.

So the first day of the trial went. There seemed no doubt that Isobel

d'Larte was guilty. Her friends admitted loudly that poor Isobel had scandalized them to the core. The papers labeled Isobel queer and hinted that her lover, whoever he might be, killed Mr. d'Larte for her. Old fashioned Isobel, they called her. Some had other names for her.

ON THE SECOND day of the trial the Defense called its witnesses. There were only three. Two were character witnesses who hesitantly assured the court that Isobel d'Larte could not have killed her husband. She really was a good woman.

The third witness was Isobel herself. When she was called she rose very slowly and walked to the witness stand. She was sworn in and seated herself in the witness chair. Her face and hands were chalk white against the blackness of her dress.

"Mrs. d'Larte, did you kill your husband?" the Defense asked.

"No."

"Do you know who did kill your husband?"

"No."

"Why did you lock yourself in your bedroom the night he was killed?"

"I wanted to be alone."

The spectators giggled.

"Could you explain how your fingerprints came to be on the iron statue of Venus? The statue that killed your husband."

"It was my statue. It is quite possible that my fingerprints would be on it."

"And you heard nothing, no sounds of struggle, the night your

husband was killed?"

"No. I slept awhile that night. I was tired so I locked my door and slept. I heard nothing."

"Do you know who would want to kill your husband?"

"An enemy I suppose."

"Did your husband have any enemies?"

"Of course, everyone does. Even God has enemies."

That shocked the spectators, but then Isobel had meant it to. Quite suddenly she found herself hating those in the packed court room. Hating these upright citizens who had come to delight in her misfortune. Who sat in smug holier-than-thou attitudes and hoped for the worst. Not one among them really cared what happened to her—as long as it entertained them. Isobel shivered.

"Could you be more specific about your husband's enemies?" the Defense asked.

"No. He never confided in me. He was only interested in his munitions factories. In machines. He loved machines. He particularly loved destructive machines. Some hated him for that."

"The man Mrs. Whychek said you met in the park. Was there such a man?"

Isobel twisted her handkerchief. It was a thin, white snake in her hands.

"Was there a man, Mrs. d'Larte?" the Defense repeated.

"There was a man."

"Could you tell us his name?"

"I do not know his name. He was a man I met in the park. He was a kind and gentle man. We talked about art, music—the beautiful old art and music. He was

well informed about such things. We talked a lot, but I don't know his name. We just talked."

"Were you in love with this man, or he with you?"

"No! No!"

"You definitely were not lovers?"

"We were not!"

"Thank you, Mrs. d'Larte. Your witness."

The Prosecutor approached the witness stand. "Mrs. d'Larte, you do not like the 'Do-It-Yourself' kits the government has put out, do you?"

"I do not."

"You do not approve or recognize the fact that today everyone is conceded to have talent, do you?"

"I do not."

"Why, Mrs. d'Larte?"

"Anyone can paint, but everyone isn't an artist. Anyone can write, but everyone isn't an author. Anyone can do anything, but everyone does not have talent."

"So you spent a great deal of your time in the Museum of the Past looking at the *so-called* art treasures there?"

"Yes. They were worth looking at."

"And you did not use that to cover up the fact that you met your lover at the museum?"

"I do not have a lover."

"The man you met in the park, you just talked to him?"

"We talked about the wonderful, the beautiful things in the museum. He knew about them and loved them as I did. There was no one else I could talk to about them."

"Naturally," the Prosecutor sneered. "Everyone else knows what frauds they are."

The spectators laughed.

"Then I like the frauds," Isobel said quietly.

"You claim you were in your bedroom with the door locked and asleep when Mr. d'Larte was killed. Is that right?"

"That is right."

"And even though your bedroom is right next to Mr. d'Larte's you heard nothing. Is *that* right?"

"Yes."

"Your husband struggled, struggled hard before he died, Mrs. d'Larte. You'll forgive me if I seem skeptical of the fact that you heard nothing."

"I was asleep. I heard nothing."

"No cry? No crashes?"

"I heard nothing!"

"And the man in the park—he was not your lover?"

"He was *not* my lover."

The Prosecutor turned to the judge with a grim smile. "Your honor, I request a recess so that I may bring in a new witness."

"This witness is not in the court room?"

"No. I myself only learned of him a few minutes ago. It will take about a half-hour to bring him here."

"And this witness is important?"

"Yes. I believe he can prove that Mrs. d'Larte is lying."

"Then this court is recessed until the prosecution brings in the new witness."

The spectators buzzed and jibbered excitedly. A new witness. A surprise witness. The trial was really becoming interesting.

"I hate to leave. I really hate to leave," one said to her companion. "I'll never get back in if I leave. But one must eat. I hate to leave."

"No need. No need to leave,"

the companion assured her. "See, I brought sandwiches. Always bring something to eat to things like this. People crowd so. It's really terrible. Have an egg?"

"Pretty good trial," an old man with a white beard told the person next to him. "Not as good as the Bronson trial, but pretty good."

"You've seen a lot of trials?" the figure next to him asked.

"Seen all the good ones," the one with the beard said proudly. "Saw the Bronson trial in '96, the Trearment trial in '94. Saw a lot of trials. First time that I've seen one where a wife killed her husband. Most of the others involved infanticide. Good trials, you understand, but disappointing. All the verdicts were not guilty."

"Naturally. With over-population infanticide isn't a crime. Rather more like a good deed these days."

"Understand they are going to legalize the killing of unwanted children."

"Should have been done long ago."

"People should be more careful. If they don't want children, they should be more careful."

"If you know you can get rid of them, why be careful?"

A woman fanned herself with her pocketbook and glanced at her companion. "Have another sandwich, dear?"

"No, on a diet you know." The companion sighed. "It's too bad that they abolished capital punishment. Believe me, this d'Larte hussy deserves it."

"But it's so much better the way they do it now, I mean sending the guilty to the wars to fight in the front lines. Might as well get some

use out of them."

"True. But why bother killing a husband? Divorcing them is so much easier. Only takes a day and you get half the husband's earnings."

"You should know, dear. You've done it enough."

"Only seven times."

"I thought it was eight?"

"I don't count Rodger. The lout killed himself so he wouldn't have to pay me a settlement. Ah, here comes the judge."

THE SPECTATORS stood lazily as the judge entered, then re-seated themselves and buzzed in anticipation.

"Your witness has arrived?" the judge asked.

"Yes, Your Honor," the Prosecutor replied.

"Then call him."

The witness was called and sworn in as the spectators gawked at him eagerly.

"Good looking. Dark. Evil eyes though. Black eyes. I like dark eyes, don't you?"

"Dark blue coat. Lime green sports shirt. Nice combination. Must have a suit made with those colors."

"Nasty look about that fellow. Wouldn't trust him."

"Who is he?"

"Shhhhhhhhhhh!"

Isobel d'Larte stared at the witness in fear.

"Your name, please," the Prosecutor demanded of the witness.

"Andy Kirk."

"You are Mr. d'Larte's nephew?"

"Yep."

"What do you do for a living,

Mr. Kirk?"

"Anything, but basically I'm an artist."

"Is that what you are doing at the present time, Mr. Kirk?"

"No. Everybody's an artist today. No room for a good one, a real one."

"Then what do you do, Mr. Kirk?" the Prosecutor asked in exasperation.

"Don't shout. I didn't ask to come here."

"What do you do for a living?" the Prosecutor asked quietly.

"Arnaud—Mr. d'Larte—paid me to follow his wife. To spy on her. He paid very well."

The spectators gasped happily. "Now we'll hear something," someone said in a stage whisper. The judge rapped for silence.

"Why did Mr. d'Larte pay you to follow his wife?"

"He thought she had a lover."

"But you heard Mrs. d'Larte claim that she did not have a lover."

"No, I didn't. How could I? I wasn't here."

Laughter rippled through the crowded room and the judge rapped for silence.

The Prosecutor frowned angrily. "Mrs. d'Larte said under oath that she did not have a lover."

"She lied."

"Can you prove that she lied?"

"I suppose so."

"And they were really lovers?"

"Mrs. d'Larte told me that she loved him."

"And he loved her I suppose."

"Mrs. d'Larte loved him."

"How long were they lovers?"

"Nearly a month."

"I repeat, can you prove it?"

"I can tell you who her lover is."

"Then by all means do so."

"No! Please, no," Isobel d'Larte cried. "I killed my husband."

When order had been restored in the court the judge stared down at Isobel.

"Am I to understand that you confess to the murder of Arnaud d'Larte?"

"Yes," Isobel said softly. "I hated him and I killed him. I killed with the iron statue of Venus. I hit him with it till he died and I hit him with it after he was dead. I killed him."

Andy Kirk smiled.

It only took a short time to bring in a verdict of guilty against Isobel d'Larte. She accepted the verdict silently and without flinching. In like manner she accepted her sentence. She was to be sent to fight in the front lines of the war in Asia.

"I declare this court adjourned," the judge said and banged his gavel down authoritatively.

As Isobel d'Larte was taken from the room she was led passed Andy Kirk. Seeing him, she stopped and stared at him coldly.

"Why did you do this to me?" she asked.

"To help you. If the trial had continued the way it had you would have been judged insane and executed here in the States. In Asia you may have a chance."

"Does it make a difference if I have a chance? No one really cares."

"You may find what you've been looking for over there."

"You think so?"

"I hope so."

"I don't understand you, Andy."

"Sometimes one must do bad to do good."

Isobel stared at him not understanding his words, then the guard led her away. Isobel d'Larte spent the night in jail, and the next morning, along with twenty other prisoners, was taken to the rocket-port to be sent to Asia. At the rocket-port the prisoners were allowed to say their goodbyes to their families without the benefit of guards. Isobel stood alone watching the tearful farewells, then walked slowly into the cafeteria. As she sat alone at the corner table drinking coffee a tall man dressed in an old fashioned top coat and with an old fashioned hat pulled down over his face walked up to the table and sat down opposite her. Isobel looked at the figure happily.

"I knew you would come."

"Why did you confess?"

"I did not want them to know about us. They would have made it all so ugly sounding. They would have made it sound vile . . . and it wasn't." Isobel reached out a hand towards the figure and a metal hand closed over hers. "I didn't want them to harm you."

"You did it for me?"

"Yes. I love you."

"I'm a robot. A machine. An unfeeling thing of iron and steel. How can you love me?"

"My husband was the machine. He ate at the same time everyday, dressed at the same time, went to work at the same time. He did the same things, thought the same things everyday of his life."

"But he had emotion."

"Only those he had been taught to feel and those only at the proper

times. He was mad when he should be mad and happy when he should be happy, nothing more. He was much more of a machine than you."

"But I cannot return your love. I do not know what emotion is."

"I had to have someone," Isobel cried. "I had to have someone who was kind to me. You liked what I liked. You could talk to me of something besides machines. Machines do everything now. But you could talk to me of art, music, beauty."

"My creator taught me those things. Taught me to care for those things in the museum. I would miss them if they were taken away."

"Yes." Sudden tears stung Isobel's eyes. No one would miss her. No one would care about her.

"I will miss you too, Isobel. I will miss you very much." *

"As much as the things in the museum?"

"As much as those. More."

Isobel stood up, leaned over and kissed the metal cheek of the one opposite her. "Then it was worth it."

"All prisoners assemble on the runway," a harsh voice boomed over the loudspeaker.

"Perhaps someday I can learn to return love," the robot said.

"You have done more than that. You have made me happy."

"Come back safely, Isobel."

Isobel d'Larte ran to the runway and joined the other prisoners. They looked at her strangely not understanding her smile. Isobel barely noticed them, for she was happy. Someone cared for her. That was the important thing. *Someone cared.* • • •

THE JUNGLE *(Continued from page 24)*

He stood by the door, listening to his heart rattle crazily in his chest.

He opened the door.

The apartment was calm, silent. The walls glowed around the framed Miros and Mondrians and Picassos. The furniture sat functionally on the silky white rug, black thin-legged chairs and tables . . .

Austin started to laugh, carefully checked himself. He knew he probably would not be able to stop.

He thought strongly about Tcheletchew, and of the men who would come to Mbarara in the morning. He thought of the city

teeming with life. Of the daylight streaming onto the streets of people, the shops, the churches, the schools. His work. His dream . . .

He walked across the rug to the bedroom door.

It was slightly ajar.

He pushed it, went inside, closed it softly.

"Mag," he whispered. "Mag—"

There was a noise. A low, throaty rumble. Not of anger; of warning.

Richard Austin came close to the bed, adjusted his eyes to the black light.

Then he screamed.

It was the first time he had ever watched a lion feeding. • • •



Strange aircraft you may be seeing any day now are not Martian. British designers have come up with a radical new wing design—the crescent shaped wing—different from anything now breaking the sound barrier. Used either curving forward or curving toward the back of the ship they make a strange spectacle indeed. But claims are that they make for much less wind resistance . . . and much more stability.

Summer vacation clothes may soon include disposable bathing suits. A specially processed wall paper has been found to have high “wet strength” and several feminine bathing suits have been made of it and are undergoing strenuous tests this year.

Transoceanic information radioed from one punch card to another will be an invaluable business blessing in the near future. A recent experiment had information originating in North Africa received in Washington, D.C. faster, more accurately and more economically than any previous system of transmitting such detailed statistical data. A machine operator loaded a data tranceiver with cards containing information recorded as

punched holes in the cards. As the tranceiver “read” the cards, it generated electronic impulses representing the holes. The impulses sent by radio actuated the punching mechanism of a tranceiver set up in Washington which created exact duplicates of the cards fed into the North African machine; thus supplying a punch card immediately available for machine processing, and eliminating several steps in accounting procedure.

Moving coal, iron ore and other raw materials may someday be done by a system of endless belts set up across the country. A working model of just such a belt conveyor has already been designed to link Lake Erie with the Ohio River one hundred miles away. If legislation can be passed to give the belt the status of a common carrier, it will be built to shuttle iron ore and coal from river barges to Great Lake carriers or to storage bins.

Travelling employees may get an earful or instructions in the future through a new vest pocket radio that resembles a hearing aid. Powered by two pen-sized flashlight cells that work for a month, and with a loud-speaker that is worn like a hearing aid earpiece, this midget marvel can be tuned to “receive” certain wavelengths. The boss can “broadcast” instructions without interference; and channels could be modified to decimal places so that there would be no crossed instructions possible.

The key to future immortality may not lie in drugs, beneficial rays or electrical vibrations but in austerity. Science has been making some

rather extensive tests that seem to prove that abstinence from such vices as smoking, drinking of alcoholic beverages and tea and coffee, sweet and fatty foods and sexual activity prolongs the life of individuals.

Electrical companies may be owning and operating their own atomic power plants within the next ten years. Introduction of the light water-moderated and cooled boiling reactor and the graphite-moderated water-cooled reactor have made early effective competition with conventional fuel plants both very possible and much more economical.

Remote areas of the world may someday be the sites of atomic age pyramids. Such "tombs" would be the burial grounds of radioactive waste fission products from atomic power plants. Assuming that atomic power will be coming into widespread use by the end of the century, there would be three tons of "hot" waste from the many reactors to be disposed of each day. Science believes that we shall need to isolate and control such waste in desert "burial grounds" to solve the menace that this type of waste poses.

Space explorers may find that the canals of Mars are really long narrow drifts of volcanic ash. According to a new theory based on a pattern of the prevailing winds on Mars, the dark green markings may be streaks of drifts made by the winds during the Martian summers. Such ash would be green because of the dry oxygen-poor atmosphere. The theory further expounds the

idea that such conditions would correspond to early stages in the development of Earth; and the red planet may possibly be one on which oceans have yet to form, and which life has yet to appear.

Cities of the future may be hiring electronic watchmen. One already in operation in New York City is concentrating its tubes and wires upon the changing demands for electrical power. It takes into consideration short time demands that come and go continuously and increases power generation as the sustained load goes up. All of this is done automatically, efficiently and economically. Other "watchmen" for a myriad number of other jobs of the same type are under serious consideration.

A look at the future of atomic power indicates that power plants will run on liquid metals which will supply fuel, control the reaction and transfer the heat out where it can be utilized. Lead, bismuth and tin or combinations of these "lighter" metals will be used. Studies are now being made to work out a method whereby the liquids would clean themselves of "ashes" of debris. This new kind of atomic power plant would not only use uranium for power, but would constantly provide uranium anew from less valuable Thorium, which can be bred into U 233 and then fissioned.

Weather forecasts "untouched by human hands" are part of a plan for the future. Some weathermen foresee a time when required data on winds, temperatures and pressures will be automatically record-

ed, then relayed by radio directly to a computer for calculation of forthcoming weather. Using numerical weather prediction a giant brain could then make forecasts as far in advance as thirty days.

A mechanical cougher, which operates like two vacuum cleaners alternately blowing air into the lungs and sucking it out again, may someday be used to save thousands of lives. An experimental working model has already been tried on babies, older children and grown-ups who accidentally inhaled buttons, pins, fishbones and so on. This new "cougher" has the advantage over the bronchoscope now in use in that it can reach places inaccessible to the instruments now used.

The toughest armor of all was given to Earth by Mother Nature. It is air—plain everyday air—the kind we breathe. And here's how it performs the function of the "world's toughest armor."

Millions of potentially devastating "bombs" from outer space shoot with deathly force and incredible speed at the face of the Earth. These "bombs" are meteors, believed to be debris from comets, which head for Earth at speeds up

to 50 miles per second and in such masses that an entire city could be destroyed. However, as the bombardment of meteors hits the Earth's atmosphere, about 200 miles up, the resistance is too much and the meteors disintegrate, breaking up into fractions of their original size and burning themselves out in tails of fire. The biggest known meteorite (as they are called after they land) to hit the Earth landed in Kansas in 1930. It weighed 820 pounds; other pieces of the same meteorite found in that area weighed up to 80 pounds.

Hoarseness is not to be taken too lightly. According to a report from the Illinois State Medical Society, it can be caused by more than 100 different diseases which affect the delicate vocal cords. Hoarseness is symptomatic of a number of things, such as colds, cheering or talking long and loud, too much smoking, or any of a number of ordinary causes. It can also be the signal that a malignancy has developed—tuberculosis, tumor or cancer. Serious hoarseness can be associated with diseases of the heart and brain. So if you have a case of hoarseness that hangs on unduly long, see your doctor.

WHAT IS YOUR SCIENCE I.Q.?

ANSWERS: 1—William Herschel. 2—Orion. 3—81. 4—Phobos. 5—Pyrheliometer. 6—Karel Capek. 7—Lower. 8—Mercury. 9—Vega. 10—Red. 11—Ten Miles. 12—Planetesimal. 13—Miranda. 14—Transit. 15—Clockwise. 16—Spacing. 17—Cepheids. 18—Messier. 19—Sixth. 20—Prominences.

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WORTH CITING

An international language whose words and sounds could be understood by all men, regardless of the native tongue they speak every day, has long been a goal. Over three hundred such languages have been invented in the last century, but none has become a real tool for communication and understanding between nations.

Now, a new tool is making its debut. Not really new in the words it uses, it has its roots in many languages. It uses the vocabulary of science and technology, which is common to almost all world languages. It uses English root words where they are common to other languages and it has borrowed from the Romance languages, Spanish, Italian, French, Portuguese, etc. The troublesome intricacies of grammar have been discarded. There is only one word form in each tense; and nouns, adjectives and verbs do not agree as they must in more complex tongues. Millions will find the vocabulary basically familiar, for it is not a new artificial language but one that uses the tools already at hand in simple uncomplicated ways.

For those who feel that peace in the world will come closer if people talk to one another in a language all mankind can understand, this "breaking" of the language barrier has a very great appeal. So this month we cite *INTERLINGUA*, a new auxiliary language for all the world. A natural language that has its roots in the national tongues of all nations.

THE GUN RUNNERS *(Continued from page 92)*

diabetes, the congenital digestive deformity he had inherited from a hundred ancestors kept alive by a superb medical science to breed her. She laid her cheek against his, the smooth velvet human-seeming cheek, with no hint as yet of the lumps of wild tissue waiting to proliferate within.

"Please don't worry, George," she said softly. "It's not your fault, really." She smiled up at him. "I've lived a rough life, most of us do, in my time. Remember, I've

earned what I received, I came here knowing what I was doing. It's just caught up with me. It had to, some day."

He caught her in his arms and pulled her tightly to him. "Oh, God, honey," he said. "I didn't know, I didn't even think . . . I'd give anything . . ." he turned his face up blindly. "Please, Lord, let the bubble break," he prayed. "Let us not be, both together, now . . ."

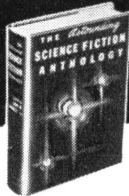
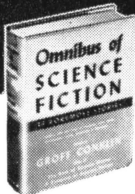
But the bubble did not break.

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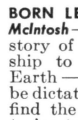
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A MIRROR FOR OBSERVERS, by Edgar Pangborn — Angelo Pontevocchio can destroy the Earth — or he can save it. But it's not up to him to decide what to do! Two Martians, posing as earthmen, have him in their power — *and THEY decide!*



WILD TALENT, by Wilson Tucker — Paul Breen was a one-man secret weapon! From his hide-out he could read the minds of enemy agents anywhere on earth! Then he got a brain wave that he was about to be killed . . . not by a foreign enemy but by **HIS OWN GOVERNMENT!**



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