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People are enjoying NEBULA. Here are a very few of the hundreds of unsolicited letters of comment received from abroad:

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There are few pleasures available here in Korea and reading your excellent magazine is one of the greatest... I feel that it is now up with the best produced on this side of the Atlantic—and Pacific, too!
Sgt. Peter M. Evans

AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND
Congratulations, yours is the only science-fiction magazine which contains anything like a satisfactory blend of scientific accuracy and really enjoyable reading.
Arthur Frew, B.Sc.

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I congratulate you on the excellent magazine you publish. It is easily the best on the market today... I have enjoyed every story... all are above the average of today’s offerings and I subscribe to twenty-two current publications.
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I think your magazine is a magnificent publication and at present the best in the field of British Science-Fiction.
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... Along with “Punch” and the “Manchester Guardian Weekly” your magazine adds to our admiration and enjoyment of things British.
Rev. Richard B. Hunter

These are the opinions of foreign readers—it’s even more popular in Britain! EVERYONE joins in saying...

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Front Cover by Kenneth McInnes  Back Cover by Arthur Thomson  Black and White Illustrations by Thomson, Frew, Greengrass and Turner
I think you will agree that I have an interesting and varied selection of stories for you this time—many of them by authors who have brought us a great deal of pleasure in the past and who will, I am sure, do so often in the future.

This time it is by a complete newcomer to our pages, but I think when you have read "Sister" by H. K. Butler, you will want to see him again. This story is, in my own opinion, an excellent piece of science-fiction writing, presenting as it does a cleverly conceived and extremely entertaining possible future of our own society as a background against which convincingly human characters act out the quietly logical plot.

Another author of whom you will be anxious to see much more is James White, who has successfully infused a new and refreshing flavor into the by now familiar "alien invasion" theme of our inevitable "Mars invasion" Mystery. In this story he lets us see things from the alien's viewpoint.

Three of the short stories are by authors who headed the 1954 Nebula Popularity Poll and it seems that they intend to hang on to the top positions this year, also. E. C. Tubb, who has now allowed his recent article in a popular weekly news magazine to go to his head, presents us with an outstanding little psychological story which advances an interesting theory regarding interstellar communication, while Eric Frank Russel points out a few of Man's vices and virtues and pronounces a logical verdict; and Sydney J. Bounds writes a little story about which I am able to say little except that I found it fascinating and memorable reading.

The past issues of NEBULA have been my policy to keep the serious type of scientific articles. However, in the last few months I have been receiving more and more requests for this type of thing and so, partly as an experiment, I give you two scientific articles of very different types in this issue. If you would like more of this kind of thing in future editions of NEBULA, or even one in each issue, I'll be pleased to hear from you. Well, I have given you a brief round-up of this issue's stories: why don't you drop me a line with your reactions?

* * *

Every NEBULA reader cannot fail to be moved by the recent news that the major world powers are now competing in the space race. It is a sign of the times and a sign of the times that this is happening. But it is only hoped that this news, inspiring as it is, will not mean the beginning of a race by the world's militaries to perpetuate and intensify their wars of terror over the rest of Mankind by building battle stations on the Moon, the planets and in space itself. It is to be

Concluded on page 112
The fleet came in fast—from the direction of the Crab Nebula—and decelerating at a rate which made it fearfully evident that the ships contained nothing resembling Human Life. Still becalmed furiously it passed within three million miles of Mars, ignoring the tiny colony there and continuing to head outwards. It passed the Sun within the orbit of Mercury, then headed onwards again, towards Earth.

Decelerating savagely into a tight orbit they swept around Earth twice. Two sub-flots from the main armada—eight fat, stumpy torpedoes surrounded by a silvery mist of ships—peeled off and screamed deep into the Earth's air envelope. Eight sides died in the fury of nuclear fusion reactions as a demonstration of the facility of resistance.

The ships met no resistance, anywhere.

The orders hustled upward to catch the main fleet, pulverizing a cargo dumb-bell which was crowding into its transfer orbit and unlucky enough to be in their way. The fleet re-formed and headed for the Moon.

The potential resistance from the domed settlements there was neutralised by more atomic bombs, then it landed on a great, barren plain, adopting the defensive formation of concentric circles.

In a nearby crater there were three geologists busy studding out a new mine. Those they took alive. One of them was allowed to stay alive. This was because, in the present unusual circumstances, a speaking representative of the enemy would be a big help.

Crinianan dur Shan, Fleet Commander of the thirty-sixth Planter Expedition, Patron of Sixty-four, and Citizen with Privilege of the Greater
Empire of Nebula, looked at the entity standing before him and felt extreme desire. Like most low-gravity creatures it balanced on only two lower, relatively strong limbs; and it was soft, flabby. In all his extremely long life the Commander had rarely seen a more horrible specimen. An uncontrollable shudder of revulsion shook him, sending quakish undertones reeling along his eight, hard-muscled tendons.

The creature’s eyes followed the movement, its face muscles wrinkled, and the sickly pink pigmentation of its skin became several shades lighter. Obviously the appearance of the Commander’s highly-trained physiognomy was stirring similar feelings in it. Dar Shen spoke first.

"What is your name, please, and rank or title?" The effort of saying "please" to the creature nearly killed him, but he said it. Momentarily covering the near-catastrophic series of mildew that had necessitated a Nebula Fleet Commander using diplomacy instead of force, he watched the creature through the transparent wall separating them and waited impatiently for the reply.

"Murchison," came the answer shakily, "I am a .. . . . . . . . The clearest the Translator could come to it was ‘A Student of Rock Formations’... . . . and we do not use titles." The voice rose in a questioning note.

"But... but you’re speaking English! Why is that?" The tone changed again sharply. "And what happened to Quigley and Williams? If you’ve hurt them F all—'

Questions—and threats—from this!

"Silence!" the Commander roared, then caught himself sharply. Diplomacy, he wasn’t frighten the thing too much. He forced his voice down to a more normal pitch and went on: "I will explain, Murchison. I do not speak English, whatever that is, but this Translator—-" He indicated the mechanism with a lightning flick of a tentacle, which is attuned to your type of nervous system, breaks down my words into a series of basic sounds on to which my meaning has been normally impressed, and you think you hear me speak in your own tongue. The effect is, of course, reversible. The operating principles of the Translator are naturally beyond your understanding, but electronics, micro-surgery, and a form of mental hypnosis all contribute to its functioning.

"This is the reason for the absence of your companions. In order to calibrate the Translator efficiently for you, we were forced to investigate the human body organization on the physical as well as on the psychological level. In the process both specimens were damaged irreversibly. However," the Commander offered as a friendly gesture, "If they were related to you, you may have a small bone from each as a Memory Piece—-"
“You baste,” said the creature slowly. “You dirty b——” There was much more—most of it unintelligible—but the Commander got the general drift of it. Not only had his gesture of sympathetic friendship been rebuffed, but the Human was adding insults to this injury—and insults of a very personal nature.

It was amusing, almost. But he had too much on his mind to spare the time to enjoy the situation.

“Enough!” he interrupted harshly. “Your insults are meaningless, based as they are upon relationships occurring only in a bisexual race. However, you have made it clear that you dislike me.”

He paused, wondering what would be the best way to present the situation to the Human. A Ledoan was polite only tosuperiors. Asking this cold, over-talkative slug for assistance was as foreign to his nature as he would have much preferred a Death with Honour. But he could not end his own life; at least, not just yet. There were close on half a million individuals, members of the Expedition, depending on him.

“This dislike is regrettable,” he resumed. “But it does not alter
measures as they affect you and your race. You are very fortunate, though you don’t know it, in being offered the chance to make terms. So that you will make your good fortune I will explain the situation as it affects your world and the colonies on it.

"Briefly," the Commander began, "I am here to plant a colony. I have a fleet of two thousand spaceships and fighting units you have, in comparison, nothing. I know this to be so by observation and experiment. When I first approached your planet, two fleets were detailed to test your defenses, to draw your fire. They drew no fire, though they reduced several of your cities in an attempt to gain you into military action. The attempt failed, red, when it was reported to me, I knew why.

"There was no defense."

And that, the Commander knew, had been a colossal piece of good fortune. As he went on he gave various thanks that this race, besides being defenseless, was also non-intelligent.

"The land and sea surface has been scanned minutely, and photographed. Nowhere is there a sign of either surface or atmosphere craft carrying any form of armament. You do not, in fact, appear to have any form of military organization at all. Your civilization is spread thinly and evenly in village-sized communities across your planet. Your so tall and imposing cities—including the ones we destroyed—are practically deserted. From all this there is only one conclusion that can be drawn.

"When a race forsakes its proud, sky-reaching cities and hags itself to the soil again, when it becomes so menaced that, lacking an extraplanetary enemy, it refuses even a mild interuce struggle, that race has become decadent, and useless—"

"But we have space travel, and atomic power—" The Human said the protest off in mid-word, as if it had almost said too much.

"True," the Commander agreed when it was obvious that the Humans weren’t going to say anything else. "You have space travel—if you can call spacecrafts chemical-powered fuel containers and those slow, flimsy "dumb-bells" that are incapable of ever landing anywhere. And we’ve seen the atomic piles dotted about the surface of your world. You use them for heat, power, and light. I am also aware that these piles could be made to produce fusible material suitable for use as a mass-destruction weapon against us. I hereby warn you that if any of these piles is modified in any way by the supervision of a Lethurian technician, we will wipe it out of existence immediately.

"It is the widespread use of atomic energy on your planet that is
saving you from complete destruction. Normally, a Planet Fleet of the Lelung clears the chosen planet of all intelligent life before landing takes place. This time I am making an exception because your race can be useful to me." Differently his voice hardened as he said: "I am extremely long-lived by your standards. But I am impatient—it has been several of your lifetimes since I last saw a solar system. I want the complete cooperation of your race. I want it quickly."

The Commander studied the Human closely. His face colour had darkened again and it was less tense. Its initial shock at meeting him had begun to wear off. That was good; it should be capable of thinking clearly. Very clearly, so that the Translator would get his meaning across with no possibility of distortion, he said:

"I want you to act as immediately—a spokesman—between the Lelung and your race. There is a communication on the wall behind you which will speak to you at any frequency." The Commander paused, choosing his words with great care—he couldn’t risk being too hasty in his demands, or overenthusiastic, either—he stated: "I require a large amount of radioactive material—a few thousands of your 'tons'—and similar amounts of certain chemicals and food-plants. Shelters will also have to be built in large numbers. Everyone on the planet will have to contribute to the work, which will be supervised by a small number of Lelung.

"Providing this work is done in a satisfactory manner, and the Lelung supervisors are not satisfied in any way, I will not depopulate the planet, but instead will allow a certain number—say about four hundred beings—to live out their lives in some sealed-off area to be chosen later."

The Human choked and coughed, his face growing very red. Apparently his breathing passages had been blocked by its digestive juices. The Commander felt an almost overpowering disgust at such animal-like behaviour in a thinking being. Finally the words came.

"That is very, very generous of you," it said.

The Commander felt pleased, but he had a vague feeling of unease, too. The Translator, he reminded himself forcefully, was fool-proof. The Human had merely expressed a natural gratitude at the generosity of his terms. He forced the doubts from his mind and said:

"Call up your home planet now, in a loosely-organized administration such as yours I expect there will be some delay in reaching a decision. However, tell them that on the speed with which they reach agreement will depend the number of Humans who will be allowed to live. That should hurry them up.

"In the unlikely event of them refusing my terms, tell them that
we have radioactive gas weapons capable of wiping them out completely in one rotation period. We would then do the work ourselves."

The Commander waited hopefully that it was all over. It seemed certain since he'd been free from this poisonous fog of worry, this grinding pressure of responsibility for the safety of his Expedition. But the end was in sight. He had contacted a member of this planet's domi-
nient life-form, and received a most satisfactory response. Almost cheer-
fully he smiled: "No more to stress the generous nature of my terms. We do not wish to do the work ourselves. It would be ... inconvenient."

It would be inconvenient.

That, thought the Commander as he turned to the communica-
tor, was without doubt the greatest piece of understatement in all Led-
margan history. The truth was that it would be diabolical, impossible. He had come with a proud fleet of two thousand fighting units, with arms capable of reducing twenty planets the size of this one, apparently invisi-
able. But, he thought bitterly, if the Humans only knew the physical and mental condition of the crews of these ships ... .

He, the whole Expedition, had been so outrageously, so unbelievably unready. He wired, physically as well as mentally, as the incidents came crowding into his mind. And it had worn off so beautifully, too.

Dor Shan was a proud and gifted Branch of the True Celestians, a connoisseur, but brilliant and ambitious, the first of the lower Branches to be given charge of a Colonisation project. He remembered the send-off, and the crowds of well-wishers. Some of them had been Nobles so old that their birth dais had been forgotten, even by themselves. The memory of himself standing at the entry port of his flagship giving the salutes of the Flera—those raised, extended tendrils symbolising the Mother Tree of Ledmag—came back to him vividly. It had been a great, proud moment. Then he had taken off.

Vehilcity had been quickly built up until the limiting speed of light was approached, then all engines had been cut—the increase in mass of a ship travelling at just under the speed of light made any attempt at moving faster a sheer waste of fuel. In every unit of his Fleet the crews had been de-energising their ships until, except for the Star Approach timers, the ships were dead. Then, in the cold and the darkness they curled up tightly, ensuaded their protective shells, and went into the deep sleep.

And, in order not to waste time, they had already begun the body processes that would result eventually in Beholding.

A solar system had been picked out for them containing at least one planet with suitable gravity and atmosphere. But spectro-analys
especially at inter-stellar distances, is sometimes inaccurate. When they'd arrived, the atmosphere of the chosen world turned out to be a not particularly slow poison as far as the Leftmung were concerned. The other planets had been useless.

The Commander barely heard the Human talking into the communicator as he remembered the shock and sense despite that had caused him. But there'd been only one thing to do, and that was try again.

When they'd left that system far behind and were free from its gravitic disturbances, the Eye had been formed. A thin, highly-reflective membrane was stretched between a circle of scoutships. By spinning the circle and accelerating forward slightly at the same time they made it a perfect concave mirror of tremendous diameter. As the mirror's centre of focus, another ship mounted the eye-piece.

With this giant telescope they searched for another system with suitable planets.

But the time for the search was strictly limited. Even in inter-stellar space there was a lot of meteoric dust, and even the best pilots couldn't hold their ships to such a tight formation for long. Fogging and distortion caused by dust punctures and the waving of the peripheral scoutships soon raised the mirror's resolving power—but not before it had served its purpose.

The second planet had everything. Atmosphere, gravity, and temperature were all perfect. The first batch had been built and transhipping was already under way when the Astronomers discovered that it wasn't such a wonderful place after all. During the time of the voyage there, they'd said, the system's Sun had become unstable. They'd advised immediate evacuation.

The Fleet had left just in time to avoid being vaporised along with their perfect place.

The situation had been critical then. Food and fuel was short, and to make matters worse, the bedding of the crew members was having its usual effect of cutting down their efficiency; and psychologically they were a mess. But he had formed the Eye again and searched until he found another likely prospect. Velocity had been built up, they'd gone into deep sleep, and eventually, with his fuel practically exhausted, he had arrived.

This time the sun was stable and the planet, though a little on the small side, was right for them. But it took only one close look at it to tell him that it was impossible.

The Leftmung were already there.

It was inconceivable—space being so big—but a previous Expedition
had already seeded the place. And they'd done it thoroughly; there was
no space left for him at all, even if he had not been bound by an un-
breakable code of ethics not to interfere, or even make contact, with a
young and immature Colony. He had quickly taken his fleet to one of
the system's outer planets, away from the maddening sight of a world
he could not touch.

The voice of the Human, suddenly raised in anger, jolted him back
14:30 present.

"...I don't want the assistant under-secretary, I tell you," it was
shouting. "I want the boss. These things are in a hurry, and they're
rough. There's got to be a top level meeting right away." The creature's
voice dropped to a low, desperately urgent whisper, and the Commander
saw that parts of its head were bashed with missiles. "This is a life
and death matter, for everybody."

Almost the Commander felt sympathy for the creature. He thought
he knew how it was suffering—he'd known what it was like to have
disaster looming on all sides, and apparently no way of escaping it. When
that third solar system had proved unsellable because it was already
seeded, things had been bad.

He hadn't, he remembered, been able to do anything for quite a
while. Three almost mind-shattering shocks of disappointment in a row
had made him exasperated, frustrated—very near conditions of mind for a
Lithon. The conditions had verged on the psychotic. Delusions of
persecution, though they hadn't seemed like delusions then, had made him
almost give up. But somehow he hadn't, though he didn't feel particu-
larly proud of the fact. He'd just decided that it would be better to be
doing something than doing nothing.

More than three-quarters of the Fleet personnel he had ordered into
deep sleep; this in itself was dangerous because each crew member bore
two lives in an advanced stage of growth, and this was a severe drain
on their life force. But in deep sleep a person didn't eat, and the food
situation had been dramatic.

There was barely enough fuel left for an interplanetary flight, let
alone an interstellar one, so the remaining personnel he set to work
processing fuel from the radioactive deposits on one of the system's
outer planets. Also, the Lithon metabolism could absorb practically
anything in the Carbon chains in food; they were able to replenish the
food stores with stuff that would keep them living, though they certainly
wouldn't thrive on it.

All the work had to be done in spacecrafts, of course. The suits
were light-dining and inflexible for the most part—definitely not the sort
of thing to be worn by a Ledhunf bearing a pair of well-developed Buds.
The Commander remembered with a shudder how many had died while
working in those cramped suits. Died horribly, under the physical and
mental agony of having their still-fragile Buds crushed by a too sudden,
unthinking movement.

And the sight of a Ledhunf dying by anything but direct violence—
they were practically an immortal race—was enough to drive several
others into madness.

Hundreds had died before he had the fuel and food for a fourth
attempt, and the remaining crew members were in poor condition. When
he'd left the system behind he set up an Eye and began to search. It was
a small Eye this time—stretched between eight ships that were connected
by cables—because the pilots lacked the eye and muscle co-ordination to
hold a larger formation. Even then the mirror developed so many bumps
and twists that it gave a raw image. He only about one second in twelve.
Too little food of the wrong kind was showing in the way his skeleton
crew were handling their ships. But apparently his luck was changing
at last. He found Sol, and Earth.

The procedure was as before, and when the Fleet was descending
into the Solar System he saw through the Flagship's telescope that his
luck was even better than he could have believed possible.

The planet had a very low gravity, but otherwise it was eminently
suitable; and it was inhabited. "This didn't matter as he intended elimin-
ating any intelligent life he found—that was prescribed usage with all
Pluton Flights, and he could do it very easily. But then he began to think
of the pitiful few really active crew members he had left, and how even
they would be hampered by their Buds while shelters were being built and
Ledhunfan food plants cultivated, and he realised how long it would take,
and how terribly few Seedz— and parents—would survive. He
thought of all that, then he thought again.

The result of his second thoughts led to an occurrence unheard of in
all the proud history of Ledhunf. He decided to make a treaty!

A sudden change in the manner of the Human at the communicator
captured his attention. He listened.

"...Yes, sir," the Human was saying respectfully. "I said eight
lights, but not like an octopus. I can't describe it. There isn't any form
of life on Earth resembling it at all, not even among the insects. And it
is strong. I'd say its home planet had a gravity pull of at least six G's,
and there must be hundreds of the things on each ship..."

As it continued speaking the Commander felt a growing self-
satisfaction. His plan was working perfectly. The Human was forming
conclusions—and they were exactly the conclusions the Commander wanted him to form. It was right about there being hundreds on each ship, but totally wrong in thinking that they were all in the splendid physical condition of the Commander. Only himself and a few of his intimate subordinates were reasonably active—building was forbidden to the higher executives on an Expedition because of its effect on their mental processes—and these had been the only ones allowed to contact the Humans. Its removal was therefore justified. But when he thought of the utter shambles his mighty and apparently invincible Fleet was . . .

From long distance observation he knew that the planet had only begun to use space flight, and space weapons were therefore unknown. But, just to be on the safe side, he’d kept the main fleet orbiting the Earth at a couple of diameters out while he sent two outfitters down to test the planet’s defenses. But they’d been no solid projectiles, no guided missiles, nothing. The outfitters had visited some of those wondrous, unbelievably fragile cities out of existence as a demonstration of the inability of resistance, then he had reached them, not because he was bolstered by the destruction of the Human cities, but because if they had hung around much longer, the physical condition of some of the pilots would have led to misunderstandings of height and distance.

If a Ludmagne cruiser had crashed up while making an attack approach, if it had blown itself to be vulnerable in any way, that would have spoiled the impression of complete and utter invincibility that he wanted to give the planet’s inhabitants.

The planet had been a paradise, a beautiful paradise. It had atomic power—these squat, cube-shaped buildings were unmistakably nuclear reactors—and hence its technology would be of assistance to his Fleet and fast-moving Fleet. But somehow it had attained atomic power without having to show the corresponding scars of atomic warfare; and from what he could see, the natives were so docile as to be incapable of harboring a racing thought in their minds.

He had taken his Fleet to the Moon and set it down in full view of the telescopes of Earth. His ships were defensive while grounded, but defense was unnecessary here. A show of force was all that was required. Then he had obtained his specimen . . .

He brought his attention back to the present as the sound of a new voice came from the communicator.

“. . . And you must make it understood that we are not yet a world state, and that calling a conference will take some time.” It was saying, “But we are speeding things up as much as possible.” The voice became questioning. “Now, I don’t want to disbelieve you, but are you sure
of your fact. We don't want to do something we'll be very sorry for
later. Tell me, what weapons have they got?

"A form of H-bombe," the Human answered. "And a fast-acting
biological weapon that I know of. There are probably others."

"I see."

"I didn't want to talk about the terms they are offering until I con-
tacted someone high up, in case of panic, you understand." "The Human
paused, then went on hastily, "but you'd better know the worst, now.
Briefly, this is what they want from us, and what they offer in return ..."

It repeated the conditions of the treaty exactly as the Commander had
given them, including the request for reaching a quick decision. Then it
waited.

"That is a treaty? Well, well."

"Yes—and a generous one, by its standards," the Human replied.

"But, tell me, what are you going to do? Can we do anything ... constructive?"

"I don't know. It depends on how much they know about us. Tell
me, do they know about our atomic—?"

"Yes?" the Humans interrupted hastily. "I've already told you
that they know. Part of the treaty is that we produce radio-active
for them." It lowered the volume of its voice slightly and went on: "We
can't change the operation of our power plans in any way. We can't make
weapons. They have the whole Earth's surface either photographed or
under observation. I repeat, the whole Earth's surface!"

"I understand," came the uncertain reply. "But tell me, Mr.
Murchison, are we being overheard?"

The Commander saw the Human exhale loudly, then answer: "That's
right. The alien Commander is a few yards away from us." The
Human threw a furtive glance over its shoulder. "It understands all we
say though it doesn't speak our language, but it definitely isn't telepathic."

"I see. Well, in that case I'll address it directly." There was a brief
pause, then speaking slowly and distinctly, the voice went on: "You
must understand, sir, that we have no rules, no supreme authority, merely
representatives of various groups of people. It will take several
hours to gather these representatives together, and possibly as much as
three or four meeting periods, before a decision can be reached ..."

Too long, the Commander thought, far too long. Maybe he had
been too lenient in his terms. He'd be more strict with these creatures—
make them jump to it. A vague worry began to tug at the back
of his mind. This Human talking over the communicator wasn't acting
properly. It should be fearful, in a state of panic, but instead it was
calm, unruffled. He listened to it without interrupting.

"... I suggest, sir," it said, "that some of our technical experts confer with you over this instrument. That way, while we are reaching a decision, you can be making your requirements known to us, and thus save time."

"I have one of our nuclear scientists with me now. If you wish to speak with him...?"

Maybe those creatures weren't so slow after all, the Commander thought. He said: "I will speak with your technicians. But remember, I am in a hurry. You must reach a decision in one half of a rotation period, not three or four, otherwise I will destroy eight of your cities for every additional hour it takes you beyond that time."

And that, the Commander thought grimly, should make them move.

"We will do our best, sir," came the reply. "But you must realize that, though we live outside them, all our production and research centers are situated in the larger cities. Destroing them might interfere with the efficiency of our later work for you."

The Commander felt frustrated, and suddenly angry. But the creature was right. He dismissed it hurriedly and began talking to the Human technicians about his requirements.

The technicians were a respectful and very attentive listener, and its knowledge of nuclear physics came as a pleasant shock to him. The Commander was profoundly grateful that the Humans were not a warlike race. The Translator, however, was apperently incapable of getting some of the more abstruse scientific concepts across properly—or the Human was slow to grasp some of the ideas. He had to go into a detailed explanation of the workings of the Lohrum atomic drive—and the fundamental principles involved—before he could make the Human understand exactly what he wanted. But finally he made himself clear to the creature, and it began giving orders to its underlings that were with it. The particular isotopes that he needed could be made. But it would require considerable reorganisation of production methods, and... a lot of time.

The Commander told him sharply that if the whole population worked on it, very little time would be needed, and the Human had better see to it that exactly that was done. Then he told the creature to summon food-chemistry and architectural technicians as he wanted the work of provisioning and sheltering his crew to be started as quickly as possible.

While waiting for the new technicians to arrive, the Commander began using his inter-ship communicator, demanding reports on the state
of his crew from the ship captain. As he listened he thought that it was a very good thing that the Human in the room with him was not hearing those reports through the Translator. They were very, very bad.

He was a ship-captain, who was reporting the death of a dormitory fall of Lofergy due to failure of the refrigeration system, off in mid-sentence. The Human, Marchion, was speaking again. He was growing suspicious of these Humans. They were properly servile before his display of power, but they didn’t appear so fearful as he had expected them to be. They didn’t, in fact, appear frightened at all.

Until he understood them fully it was more important that he listen and learn as much as he could.

"... And did you learn anything useful back there?"

"We certainly did," the encluse technician that the Commander had spoken to replied. "The eighty per cent, efficient, controlled conversion of matter into energy! That’s the space drive that would give us..."

And it’s such a simple affair, too. But it was a bit late to do us any good."

"I guess so," the Human, Marchion, said. Then: "Er, tell me. Were you stalling back there? You didn’t seem very bright."

"What do you think?"

The Commander felt suddenly confused. Bright? Luminous- over a non-visual communicator? And what exactly was "stalling"?

There was ambiguity in the words that was confusing both the Translator and himself. He wouldn’t have that.

"Shush!" he ordered. Then: "You are using words the meaning of which is not clear. You will cease doing this immediately, or I will inflict physical punishment on the Human Marchion, here." He said to that suddenly white-faced Human: "Find out if your conference of ‘representatives’ has reached a decision yet."

The Human began talking rapidly into the communicator, but the Commander noticed that the words it used were simple, and their meanings clear.

Eventually a voice that he had heard before said: "We are sorry, sir, but no decision has been reached as yet."

No decision yet! What did these creatures think they were doing? Didn’t they know he could strike their entire planet out of existence in a matter of minutes if he wanted to? But he knew he wouldn’t do that— not while his Fleet was in its present predicament.

But they would have to hurry.

He said quietly: "Tell your ‘representatives’ that they have two hours in which to reach a decision, otherwise I will begin bombing your..."
"No, please," the Thuman said. "We will be as quick as possible."
There was a short pause, then it went on: "You must understand, sir, that there are those among us who are not realistic. Rather than have our race exist merely as a handful of animals in an alien sun, they say we should fight. They would prefer, as they put it, death before dishonour—"
"Enough!"
The Commander felt shocked, outraged. What, he thought with a burning sense of shame, did these... these animals know about honour? Controlling the volume of his voice with difficulty, he said:
"Do not use that word to me again. Honour is for the higher species alone. However, I do not believe that your race can be so utterly decadent, so completely lacking in the will to survive, that they will choose wholesale suicide. You must realise that while there is life—several hundred lives in fact—there is always hope, and, conditional upon a rapid agreement to assist me, of course, I will make a further generous concession."
I will be pleading with them next, the Commander thought bitterly. He now fondly admitted to himself that the Humans had him worried, because simply, they weren't worried; at least, not enough. Could they, he asked himself, have some secret, irresistible weapon? But no, they would have said it at his first hostile action.

The Commander pushed the growing anxiety into the back of his mind and went on:

"I solemnly promise that, as well as the number which I said would be allowed to live, these Humans will also be allowed to breed, and a similar number of their offspring will be allowed to live to perpetuity."

This far I am prepared to go, the Commander thought anxiously, and no farther.

The voice from the communicator said: 

"Hi, yes, I will inform them of your... er... concession at once."

During the silence which followed, the Commander ignored the Human in the room with him, and instead listened to the reports coming in from the ships of his Fleet. Crew members going insane; crew members killing themselves; crew members turned into the same shades of having to shed limits that had become dead and brittle through malnutrition—the shame of being completely immobile, dependent. The Commander felt sick. And another delirium of deep-sleeping Laisseang had perhaps; the unshelled eggs of the sun and the baking heat of this moon's pimmy-covered surface, taken together, was overloading the under-powered refrigeration units.

Fuel was terribly scarce, but he'd have to use some anyway. He would take his Fleet up to a near-zero lunar orbit, away from that burning grey dust. It was the only answer. He was about to give the order when the communicator came to life again.

"Mr. Murcillon," it said briskly. "You may have heard of me; you may not. My job, normally, is superfluous. I will tell you this so that you'll understand who I am and the necessity of giving accurate, factual information..."

What, thought the Commander aghast, was this?

"... What exactly," the voice continued, "do you know about their weapons, especially the time-lag between their decision to use them—in the unlikely event of our conference voting against surrender, of course—and their arrival here?" The voice became less brisk and its timber changed markedly. "You know how we feel about this, Mr. Murcillon, the aversion we have towards all forms of violence, and towards killing. Can you believe me that even I feel the same way strongly."

But, in
order to decide, the conference must know. Is there a chance of less harsh conditions—?

"No!" the Commander interrupted harshly. "There is not! The conditions will not be derived from. No further concessions will be made." He stepped, thinking about that voice. The tone, the method of expression, the air of authority, all sounded somehow familiar. It sounded—almost—like a Lehning. It sounded, he realized with a sudden shock of surprise, Military! With anger and anxiety battling for control of his voice he went on: "I am now that your race does have a military organization after all, even though I've been unable to detect a single, armed surface vessel. I believe, however, that this organization is impoverished by lack of arms and support, and completely atrophied by neglect; its edicts of command have become, I suspect, hollowly.

He paused again, then deliberately raising the volume of his voice and speaking slowly and distinctly, he said: "You have taken a grave risk by using this important organization as a threat to obtain further concession.

"I will give you the information that you seek from Marschion.

"Should your 'representatives' be so suicidally stupid as to decide to fight, they will have approximately three of your hours to live after the decision is made known to me—two and a half hours for my drive units to become energized, and half an hour to arrive there at full acceleration. Tell your conference of this. Also tell them that I have decided to lift my ships into an orbit around your satellite and, if they have by that time decided to co-operate, the movement of my forces will not be meant as a threat towards them. If they have not decided, then..."

"Lolos!" He flipped on the General Call switch without turning off the Translator so that the Humans on Earth could hear him.

"To cruisers 1534 and 1529: prepare and load germ weapon projects. To all units: commence preparations for take-off immediately!"

For a short time there was silence. Then:

"General," said Marschion in a suddenly frightened voice. "Two and a half hours, then they'll be--"

"Quite!" heark to the General.

"General," came the voice of another Human on Earth. "Let me speak to it for a moment. We've got to do the right thing here. Maybe in two hours we could suggest something else, something less bloody."

"If I am out-valued," the military Human said slowly, "Well and good."

Definitely a very decadent race, the Commander told himself; those
had not been the words of a true fighting creature. But to still feel money...

The Human was talking again.

"Sir. You must realize that we are an advanced race. While we have grown to abhor any form of violence, we still like a certain amount of freedom. This means that we would produce much more efficiently for you if we did so willingly, in co-operation, instead of being forced. An individual cannot be driven to using his brain...."

The first solar system had been a bitter disappointment. The second and third failures had also demolished his mind. But they hadn't. Somehow he'd hung on. He'd hung on while his mighty fleet—with its starving and rotting crew—flow the interstellar night, outwardly an impenetrable, shining spearhead of Empire. He had possessed stubbornly while all reason demanded that he cease. Cause making concessions to the health of his crew; cause the growing realization of discipline that the over-worked of skeleton crews made necessary; cause, in fact, to live—while he still had a few shreds of pride, authority, and honour left to him. Honour was very important to a Libraurian. But he had continued to make concessions and compromises, until...

"This, he thought with a cold, furious anger that he had never known before, was too much.

The Human was saying: "...We have therefore a counter-proposal to make. Instead of settling on Earth, we offer you—unconditionally—our planets: Mur and Versus. With your giant ships you could ferry our men and matter to those planets. The shelters you require could be built very quickly—we are expert at the high-speed construction of prefabricated parts—and we could generate the air necessary if the native atmosphere was unsuitable to you. This would be an ideal arrangement for both of us, because we could produce the material you need much more quickly and efficiently if we were not subjected to the physical and psychological shock of constant contact with a completely alien life-form. There would almost certainly be friction between us otherwise.

"If you agree to this," the Human argued, "and settle on our sister worlds, eventually the ill-feeling brought about by the caualisms inflicted on us during your attack would fade. We would then be able to exchange scientific and cultural knowledge; both our races would be bound to benefit excessively. Instead of master and unrelenting slave, we could go forward together as friends, brothers."

There was a pause, the Commander found, where blinding, all-consuming anger stopped and was replaced by an icy, merciless calm. He passed that point with the Human's last few words. Never could a
Lusang have been so terribly, so unbelievably insulted.

The Lusang, brothers, with these swarming, crawling slugs . . .

"We want only peace," the Human ended, "At almost any price.

Violence, killing, is against us——" the Commander thundered in a

terrible voice. "You have deep roots to bear."

He had come so far, so very far. Four star systems he had tried, and

nothing but disaster and death despite he met him at each one. But

now he felt strangely least to take the honours—and easy —way out.

He felt a little like that ancient, legendary Tom of Lusang, when it

was still unobserved, still conceal. At that time it had been beasts by the

atmosphere elements of wind and electrical discharge, starved of moisture,

and riddled with vermin until it had been almost completely rotten. But

it had survived.

It had survived, so the legends told, because it had dug off the

rotten Branches and fought on with the small though perfect maiden.

The moral was plain: it could be applied here. He had been too

yielding, too merciful, far too long. All members of his crew who

were in a reasonably fit condition would collect into one or two ships,

and they would go down and feed that planet without help. It would

take a long time to accomplish—and there would be many casualties—

but it could be done. He knew he couldn't fail, singly because all that

could happen to him had already happened; there couldn't be any more

misfortune left. The rest of the Expedition—the moving, deep-seaing and
discuss Branches of his Planet—he would order away, on a course set

automatically to intersect the Sun.

But first he must clear Earth of its Humans.

Ignoring the creature Munro, who was sitting gropped against a

bulkhead watching him, he said into his communicator:

"Cruisers 1304 and 1328, report!"

"Guns weapons armed and loaded as ordered, sir," the reply came

promptly. "We are ready to take-off——"

At that moment the Earth missiles arrived. They rained down on

the grounded Lusang fleet thickly and continuously for almost three

seconds. A few had vision undets, but most need the frightfully
destructive energy of the hydrogen-onium fusion reaction. The inner

plain boiled and belled in the heat of the hundreds of tiny suns that

blazed suddenly into life on its surface, and for hundreds of miles around

the resultant ground shock-wave battered diggawal and mountain peaks

flat the mounds of dust. Nothing was left of the Lusang fleet but a
four shatterd hulls embedded in the fast-cooling slag that had once been a panic-covered plane.

By some freak of chance his control room was undamaged, but on the Human's side of the transparent wall the air was leaking badly. The creature's voice, coming through the speaker diaphragm of the helmet it had donned, grew weaker as the atmosphere which enclosed it grew less.

"We are not a peaceful race, Commander. We were, until recently, the very opposite." He disengaged the visor. "We fought bitterly, incessantly, amongst ourselves for centuries—and over the most paltry and stupid things. With each new war our weapons improved. The wars became more widespread, more cold-blooded, more murderously-destructive. They became so frightful that we began to grow heartily sick of war.

"But old habits die hard.

"We stopped fighting, but we couldn't trust each other at first—we kept on aiming. One side had atomic bombs, then everyone had atomic bombs. One side succeeded in putting a speck of uranium up to act as an observation and missile launching platform. Soon the other side had missiles capable of attaining orbital velocity, too. Non-nuclear weapons and weapon-carrying were by then obsolete. The first side took its idea a step further and set up a base on the Moon. The other side answered this by developing missiles capable of reaching the Moon. And so it went on.

"None of these weapons were ever used, of course. They were stored away in safe places, but in such a way that they could be used at very short notice." The Human paused, leering himself more comfortably against the crook angle of the floor. The Commander listened dully as he continued.

"Big cities were obvious targets for atomic attack, so devastation was forced upon us. The cities became practically deserted. We kept spending fantastic sums just to feel secure, but naturally we never felt safe at all. Then one day we all realized how stupid it all was, and how unnecessary—"

"But where were they hidden?" the Commander burst out, a burning curiosity momentarily lifting him out of his apathy. "I couldn't see any weapons."

"I know," replied the Human. "That surprised us. If not actually visible, we thought they would be detectable, especially when you put all those floating camera-picks above our power piles. But when we found out what you are like, and the gravity you must be accustomed to"
at home, we realized that you would never think of looking for them
where they were hidden.

"On your home planet with its high gravity, I'd say that you don't
210 go in for tall buildings; you must have a fear of falling—or of having
something fall on you—amounting to a psychosis. You could never
believe that anyone would build deeply . . . underground."

That decided him. "To be honest was bad; but to be beaten by a
creature that borrowed and lived in the ground, by an insect . . . The
capsule was reputed to be painful.

"We did so want to be friends with you," the Hmum was saying
as the final paralysis crept along the Commander's limbs. "But when
you decided to take your fleet into space again—making it an almost
hopeless target for our missiles—we couldn't risk it. We had to hit
you before you could scatter . . ."

The Commander ceased to care about or hear the Human king before
it had finished talking. The Death with Honor is quick.

JAMES WHITE

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The Beautiful Martian

The landed, bearing gifts of joy, happiness and wonder.
She could not know that earth would not be interested.

Illustrated by Martin Frew

It was Christmas Eve. Hoar frost mantled the forest and hung like
drops of crystal dew about silver fir needles. In the valley, the timber
roofs of the village were white and the peal of a church bell was echoed
by chirping robins. It was a time of peace and goodwill to all men,
proclaimed the excellent.

High in the sky a blare of light shone out, trailing sparks towards
the earth.

"A motor!" cried some of the villagers.

"A sign," declared others.

Lower came the splendid thing, flushed rose-pink, swooping like a
bird and shooting sprays of stars. Down and down, issued bubble-like
in rising air currents, hovering, falling, a bright gem on storm-tossed
foam.

"Lovely," sighed a small child, clapping hands.

It came to earth on the green triangle at the north end of the village
and all the people hurried to greet the voyagers from space. The mayor
dressed his robes and hung the chalice of office about his throat. The
children picked flowers to make a bouquet. The women put on their
Sunday hats.
“They’ll be hungry,” murmured the baker’s wife, and put fresh dough in the oven to bake, singing all the while.

A subtle excitement hinted there on the green. They stood in groups, loosely circling the silver spheres, a sense of wonder pervading them. Conversation was conducted in hushed tones, and even the children were quiet. They waited for the miracle to happen.

A soft, thrilling music began. It came from the sphere and moved gently through the village to the fronted lens. There was no other sound, for the bell-ringer too had joined the circle. The music had no melody, no rhythm, yet it was beautiful. The policeman’s dog lay with his muzzle between his paws, tail wagging in appreciation.

Then, with unseeing efficiency, the wonderful sphere divided in two parts, initiating an egg.

“It’s hatching out,” said a chicken farmer with conviction.

A horde of flame danced out, wound into the air and playful com-
manded a ballet above the heads of the villagers. A long sigh surged
through all who watched the fire-flying. The mayor forget his speech
of welcome and children clipped delightfully.

Gliding, splashing, dancing, leaping from rooftop to rooftop, darting
from water-rock to chimney-cowl, from wall to beam, skimming the pond
where ducks floated in solemn procession, it was a sight to gladden the
heart. Pure and radiant it was, a dancing, flickering flame, changing
form and hue, vivacious, never still for a second but always playing some
new game.

The robins joined in, flying splendid circles about the flame-being,
seizing it as it sang. Children threw flowers into the air and called it to play
with them. They began to dance in the streets, the mayor with the
baker’s wife and the postman with the school-teacher. They lit bonfires
and set off crackers, brought out the Christmas trees decorated with
noodles. They sang carols and showered the two babies of the silver
sphere with holly and mistletoe.

“It’s beautiful,” said the butcher wistfully.

“Of course,” exclaimed the poet angrily. “You mean she! As if a mere it
could be so wonderful. She is lovely . . .”

She seemed to sense the pleasure she gave for she danced faster and
sparkled more gently than before. She played with the children and the
robins and the animals of the village. All night the snow-making went
on for no-one could think of sleeping. They brought out tents-tables
and covered them with white starched cloths and handed them with food.
They drank and sang and danced away the hours, for who could tell
when the miracle might end?
“Mummy,” said one small girl, “she won’t go away, will she? The beautiful thing—be won’t leave us, now?”

“Hush, darling,” said her mother tenderly. “You must enjoy the moment, for to-morrow . . .” She could not finish.

And all the while, she danced through the air, a delicate pastel light throwing off sparks, now blue, now silver, waverimg, blazing up again. She was brilliant gold, violet, crimson and turquoise, a shimmering coronation of colors never before seen. Her dance was pure joy, eternal ecstasy, delirious with wonder.

The excitement grew and turned into Christmas day. The news spread far and wide from that remote valley and civilization sent the easiest men to reach.

They came in men, the scientists with their apparatus, the footmen who proclaimed the end of the world, the sophisticated laughing brittle laughter, the bored newspaper men. The rumbles of trucks and heavy guns sounded through the village streets, the pompous talk of politicians echoed and made a parrot-house of the silent fires, the business men sharpened their wits to invent a thousand money-making schemes.
There was buried wire and pan-words and intricate experiments, brick telephoning and a coming and going of messengers.

“Potential menace,” said the military mind, “every precaution must be taken.”

“Radiation of an entirely new kind,” pronounced the scientist, “a life form out of this planet.”

“Flee a little,” whispered the financiers, “create a new market. Thousands in it?”

She danced for them all, making a mockery of their buried wire, playing with the marks and trying to make friends with wooden-foot soldiers. She spindled and flamed and throbbed, twirled and blue and flared her dazzling rainbow.

“A monster from Mars,” screamed the reporters. “Menace from space threatens to engulf the world in flames!”

“The angel of death is upon us,” rallied the fanatics. “Save your souls while there is yet time.”

“Cannot possibly exist,” decided the scientists, and became blind men who would not see.

Still she coursed, performing aerial convolutions, yelling her alien song and radiating chromatic splendour.

“Evacuate the village,” ordered the general. “Women and children first.”

“Don’t panic,” advised the politicians, running round in circles.

“There must be no panic!”

“A circus?” wondcred the insomniac. “A sideshow? Or only a one-night stand?”

The villagers wavered in their faith. The mayor joined the ranks of uniforms and importantly began the evacuation; lories and food-parcels and most little labels.

“Fools,” cried the poet, leaping to a high roof and dressing jester’s clothes. “There is no evil in her, only beauty. Open your hearts and you will see! The children see—see you then such fools to blind your—selves with fear!”

They told the fire-brigade to bring him down, then locked him away in a madhouse.

“Women and children first,” repeated the general.

But the children were crying and the dogs shrank howling away. Her dance went on, but without that vital spark; her song was sad because the children cried, and her colour grew sombre. The state of intoxication had departed from the village and an ugliness welled up from the soths of its inhabitants, covering their faces with the marks of beasts.
"A devil," they whispered. "Destroy, destroy!"
They picked up sticks and stones and garden forks, swept aside the
soldiers and the wire entanglements, and surrounded her with fear and
hate.
"Death," they shouted. "Death and death and death again!"
She shook before them, fumbling, staggering, her eyes alight with
terror as they roared at her. They loomed over her and smashed the
twin halves of the wonderful ship. They left nothing to mark the spot, not even a cross.
The silence reached to the frost-covered hills and beyond to the cities
which sighed with relief.
"Nothing more for us here," said the general brusquely, and marched
his men away.
"No money in it," decided the financiers with a shake of the head.
"Safe now," mumbled the politicians. "No need for panic."
The cars drove off, back to science and cocktails and the blue of
radio. A silence settled over the village, a long cold silence filled only
with the shame and guilt of all humanity.

SYDNEY J. BOUNDS

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Quis Custodiet...

They hold the lives of millions in their hands... and sometimes the strain was very great

Illustrated by John J. Greenham

The dream was always the same.

He walked across a featureless plain beneath a featureless sky. It worried him a little, this sky, dun-coloured, cloudless, still, without a sun or moon or any recognisable thing, but the plain worried him more. He couldn't see the surface; it was covered with a writhing, knee-high mist, slate-blue and writhing about his legs as he walked. The hidden surface wasn't hard and firm beneath his feet but soft and yielding and, for some reason, he knew that if ever he stopped moving it would suck him down and engulf him as though it were quicksand. The sky was bad, the plain was worse, but what really upset him was the blonde.

She wouldn't stop screaming.

He never could see her face, but the rest of her was quite plain. She stood some distance before him, slight against the sky, tall, supple, dressed all in white and very, very feminine. Her long, inlaid hair fell across her features; her white, long-fingered hands clenched in the thick twine and she seemed to be as though waiting for him to join her, to lift her hand and to stare into her face. And she screamed... and screamed... and screamed.

He always awoke just before he reached her.

Paterson looked up from the china bowl as Thorne entered the room and his eye narrowed with unconscious speculation. "Sleep well?"

"I slept well enough." Thorne made a point of not looking at the psychologist. "Any coffee?"

"Help yourself." Gregory jerked his head towards the hot plate, his eyes not leaving the board. "Your move, Pat."
“Is it?” Paterson glanced at the board, moved a knight, then stared again at Thom. “You don’t look so good. Sure you slept well?”

“For Pat’s sake!” The coffee pot made a metallic clang as Thom slammed it down. “What is this? I told you...”

“Take it easy, Thom.” Gregory didn’t raise his voice but his expression as he stared at his co-worker was unmistakable. Thom swallowed.

“Sorry, but you’d think once was enough. Sure I slept well. Satisfied?”

“Maybe.” Paterson knew his job too well to display any anger he may have felt. He looked up as the fourth man on the Station entered the living quarters. Waters was the oldest one of them all. Older than Paterson by five years and older than either of the creations by filters. He sighed as he sat down, his gray hair and wintry blue eyes making him look like the popular conception of an absent-minded professor. He only looked like that.


“Mine,” Gregory pointed at the piece. “What do you advise, Doc?”

“Reign.”

“What?”

“Give Pat the game, you’ll be bummay in three moves.” Gently Waters pointed them out with one thin finger. “See? You lose a rook and they must move the queen to cover. Queen goes and...” He sipped at the coffee.

“Darn!” Gregory lowered his exhalation. “Why can’t I ever manage to win a game with Paterson? He beats me every time.”

“One answer could be that I’m a better man,” suggested the psychologist. He stared at Waters. “Snoop with?”

“Now he’s starting on his side-kick,” grunted Thom disgustedly. “You’d think that at least our head-shrinker would have left the other head-shrinker alone.”

This time Gregory didn’t reprimand him. He stared at Paterson as if trying to figure out the nastiest form of death to which the human body could be subjected. “When you said that you were the better man,” he said slyly. “Did you mean that seriously?”

“He meant that he was a better chess player,” said Waters softly. “After all, he’s had longer to learn the game than you have.”

“I was talking to the boy, not to his dog,” snapped Gregory rudely. He stared at Paterson. “Well?”
"I did not mean the remark to be offensive," said the psychologist coldly. "Why are you getting so upset?"

"I'm not getting upset."

"Yes, you are. The signs are obvious, even to a layman."

"I tell you that I'm not getting upset," snarled Gregory. He swore deeply and walked out of the room. "To hell with this! What are you trying to do, drive us all crazy?" He looked appealingly at Water. "Can't you do something with him?"

"Relax, Captain." The old man began to set up the pieces. "Care for another game?"

"No."

"Poker, then?"

"No," Gregory sneered at Thorne. "I'm going to check the instruments. Coming?"

"Sure." Really Thorne gulped his coffee. "Anything to get away from these two. Anything at all."

Alone the two psychologists looked at each other.

The problem was one which had plagued the world ever since the invention of Authority. The Romans had summed it up very nicely in a phrase both cynical and apt. Quo Vadis! Quo Vadis? Who will watch the Watchers? Or, literally, who will protect the people from their own protectors? Normally it didn't really matter. Those who had power invariably used it and were eventually replaced by others who inevitably followed the same path. But while men could only control a limited amount of destruction it wasn't too important. Men might suffer but Man was safe. It was only when Man had finally perfected a way utterly to destroy himself and his planet that the problem became one of immediate urgency.

And there was still no solution.

Water thought about it as he sat in his chair and watched his fellow-psychologist set up the pieces. As ever he was acutely aware of the eternal destruction all around him. About two of the Earth, some forty thousand miles below, sitting like a big round ball, helpless against the atomic death which could be rained upon the land by the touch of a hand. Mankind which, once released, would completely and finally put a finish to the hopes and dreams, ideals and frustrations of some two thousand million men, women and children.

Why he wondered at the mortality of a race which had set up a colossal destruction weapon over its collective head and then seemed with
QuiCustodiet

fears in case it would never be used. The obvious thing would have been to dismantle it, but when have men ever done the obvious? The Station was the Great Pacemaker, the Inescapable Avatar ready to deal death and destruction to the entities of its builders. So they had believed and so they continued to believe, but, once built and established, they had run smack into the hard wall of reality.

Who was going to Guard the Guardians?

One man, crazed perhaps, sick maybe with the sense of waiting for the order which never came, could ruin the world. Or he could imagine himself a God or a Devil. He could attempt to hold the world to ransom, or form a clique, or do any of a thousand things that his fancy dictated. He could do anything once in charge of the Station—and there was nothing anyone could do to stop him.

And yet the Station had to be kept ready for immediate use or its purpose was wasted.

"Gregory's cracking," said Paterson as he stared at the board. "Did you notice how he smiled?"

"A normal reaction." Waters fought against his instinctive dislike of his fellow psychologist knowing it to be due solely to environment.

"He seemed all right to me."

"Thems too. He isn't sleeping well and yet insists that he is."

"And you?"

"Me?" Paterson looked surprised. "I'm all right."

"Are you?" Waters shrugged. "You've been up here six months now. That's a long time for Station duty. I've only been here three and I can sense the strain." He moved a pawn. "Thems came up after Gregory, didn't he?"

"Yes. Gregory's been here five months. Thems about four."

"Average time for criminals is not over six and for psychologists a little longer." Waters stared thoughtfully at the board. "Trouble is, if you know the man better than one you don't. Ground tests went out the obviously unsuitable, but no one can predict what may happen to any one man once in full control of the Station. I say we keep Gregory as long as possible before asking for a replacement."

"I know my job, Waters," said Paterson stiffly. He slammed a knight down with somberly. "Your move."

"Maybe it should be yours—down to Earth I mean." Waters stood at the younger man. "I've been watching you, Paterson, just as you've been watching me and both of us the others. You're too easily annoyed, too impatient, too much inclined to make hasty judgments. As
a psychologist you should know better than to arouse unnecessary antago-
nism. All you're doing is to drive the two crewsmen closer together, the very thing we want to avoid. Making them hate us may divert their emotions and provide an escape medium, but we must make them hate each other too. If we don't, we may wind up finding that they've decided to do the very thing we're supposed to guard against."

"I know my job," repeated Paterson coldly. "You know as well as I do that the whole purpose is only having two crewsman is to reduce the possibility of collision to a minimum. Even if they did so decide we can prevent them, our numbers are equal."

"They're younger than we are," reminded Waters. "and never forget that one of us may decide to join them."

"Ridiculous!" Paterson seemed genuinely amused. "The basic types are hopelessly incompatible to begin with. We don't have to worry about anything but mental aberration of an individual." He tapped on the board. "Your move."

"When you come to think of it," mused Waters, as he moved a rook, "the entire concept is ludicrous. Two men who do nothing but stand by day after day in case they are ordered to fire the missiles. Two other men who do nothing but watch the crewsmen to make sure they act normally." He shrugged. "'Normal?'! How can men ever be normal when they are watched so closely?"

"Can you suggest a better way?" Paterson moved a piece with an irritated gesture.

"No," admitted the older man. "Not a better way to both staff and control the Station, but wouldn't it be better not to have the Station at all?"

Paterson didn't answer.

Outside of the living quarters the Station was a mass of strange bins, launching tubes, electronic computers, observation instruments, radiant eyes and all the other essential appendages of its function. Gravity was provided in the living quarters by the spin of the Station but outside, towards the glimmering metal of the launching tubes, gravity was absent. Gregory, sneaking inside his suit, grunted as he launched himself towards the instruments. Thoms, a shapless bulk beside him, waited as the Captain unloaded the missiles and reset the spools. They didn't speak until the job was finished.

"How long you sticking it, Gregory?" Thoms's voice sounded thoughtful as it came over the unit radio. While he would never admit it, he deliberately delayed re-entrance to the living quarters in order to
Quis Custodiet

avoid meeting the searching gaze of the psychologist. Gregory shrugged
then, realizing that the gesture would be unobserved, granted.

"Don't know or won't tell?" Thorne laughed without humour.
"I don't believe you. With those hand-doctors questioning every word
and action you can never tell when they'll be sending for replacements."
"Don't worry about it, and don't fly off the handle so much. That's
the quick way to get sent back."
"You should talk."
"I know, but there's something about Paterson gets under my skin.
Wants in so bad, at least he don't seem to deliberately needle any-
one, but that Paterson?"
"Did you sleep well?" Thorne asked. "As if he gives a damn
whether I slept well or not?"
"Did you?"
"Did I what?"
"Sleep well."
"No," admitted Thorne reluctantly. "I didn't, but what's that got
to do with him?"
"Why don't you ask him?" Gregory sounded curt. Thorne twisted
his body to stare at the captain but could only see a blurr beyond the
other's face.
"What's the matter, Greg? Something on your mind?"
"Not really. The other man seemed to hesitate. "I... Oh, to hell with it! If it wasn't for the money I'd ask to be sent back now."
"Back?" Thorne stared at the revolving ball of Earth below them.
"I wonder what it's like down there now?" He gave a short laugh.
"Funny, I've been away only a few months and it seems like forever.
The shows, the crowds, the girls..." His voice dropped a little. "The
girls."
"You got one?"
"A girl? No, not what you'd call a real girl. Not one I want to
marry anyway. You?"
"Yes. We're going to get married when I return." Gregory's voice
softened as he thought about it. "That's what made me volunteer for
Station duty. With the triple pay and the one-to-one leave afterwards,
we could have got married without any worries." He caught himself.
"We can get married."
"Must be nice to get married," mused Thorne. "To settle down
and raise kids." He chuckled. "Maybe you'll take them out one fine
night and tell them about the time when you held the
entire world in the palm of your hand."
"How do you mean?"

"Don't tell me you don't know, Greg. With the electronic stuff here a moron could trip the releases. All they want us for is because we're more reliable than a servo-mech. We can answer the radio and, if ever we get the signal, boom . . . " He sucked in his breath. "If it does happen we'll have a grandstand seat for the biggest show in history. Man! will that be something to talk about!"

"I don't like to talk about it," said Gregory softly. "Don't forget, my girl's down there."

"We won't hit your girl. She's safe with all the rest of our people. That's why we're up here, so that if anyone starts anything we can finish it. And I mean finish it."

"Yes," said Gregory softly. "We could finish it, couldn't we?"

Below him the Earth looked a mottled ball of green and brown, grey and flocy white, tumorous and, somehow, almost aerial.

The warning came two days later. It was the thing for which they waited, the one thing they had hoped never to hear. The radio whined its attention signal, coaxed as the screeches and insulated them instead to a cold, impersonal voice:


"Received," said the impersonal voice, and the radio clicked into silence. Thorne exhaled with a long, low whistle.

"Man! This is it!"

"No!" Gregory swallowed as he fought the sickness inside of him.

"It's only warning yellow. All we have to do is to check the firing computers, load the missiles and remove the safety fuses."

"And on warning red we align the tubes and keep one finger on the button," Thorne nodded. "I know, but this is the first time we've ever had even warning yellow."

"Routine," said Paterson. "Just routine." He looked at Waters. "That's all it could be, isn't it?"

Waters shrugged. He seemed nervous, as if he watched the two crewmen begin their preparation, he sat down with a listlessness unusual in one so normally active.

"They want to keep us up to scratch," said Paterson, more to himself than to the others. "Drill, almost, a routine check, nothing to it really."
“Drill once in two years?” Gregory shook his head. “We don’t need drill. The maintenance crew keep everything in top-order. All we’re here for is to pull the trigger.” He looked at Thorne. “Well, are you ready?”

“Sure.” Thorne seemed looking with anticipation. “Shall I slip out the fuse and load the tubes while you check the computers? Or would you rather have me do the checking?”

“I’ll do it.”

“Right.” Thorne headed towards the door. “Listen for the racket.”

Normally the launching tubes were left empty. Loading them was a matter of energising the servo-mechanisms feeding the slender missiles into the rails. It took hardly any time at all, the delaying even less, but the noise of the conveyors vibrated through the station with an unmistakable sound. That sound was different, designed to prevent any man hearing and firing the missiles without warning the rest of the personnel. It was possible that one man might break and run amok, but even if he did manage to overpower the two men normally on duty with him, he couldn’t prevent the off-duty man, locked in his sleeping quarters, from being wakened by the warning racket and throwing the safety-cut-out switch.

As Thorne left the living quarters, Gregory lifted the dust covers on the instruments and threw a series of toggles. Lights glowed before him and snails kicked and then struck as power angled through the big computer. On a screen above the panel, Earth, huge with magnification, receded into view. Smaller screens gave higher magnification, their area of coverage marked by thin red squares on the master image. Suddenly, the casual atmosphere of the living room had been replaced by the cold, metallic efficiency of a master control room.

The racket came just as Gregory turned from the instruments.

It was startlingly loud, thundering from the metal and vibrating in the air. It lasted for almost five minutes and, when it finally died, they all knew that the tubes were ready and waiting.

Thorne came back just as Paterson had put on the coffee. “Well, we’re all set and ready to go. Wonder where it will be?” He stared at the master image. “Hope that the weather conditions are right, we don’t want to miss.”

“We can’t miss,” said Gregory. “The seas are too large.”

“Miss hitting dead-centre I mean.” Thorne sniffed at the odour of boiling coffee. “Good. I’m all for something to drink, but it should have been something stronger.”
"You seem to be glad at the prospect of a war," said Paterson wortendously. "Surely you don't really want to see another conflict?"

"What I want doesn't matter, does it?" Theme sat down with a cheerful grin. "I'm not the one to decide policy. If the Big Brain say blast, then it's blast. Anyway, anything's better than sitting up here day after day waiting to go crazy. Give me action every time, there's nothing to beat it."

He rose as the coffee boiled over and poured out four cups. "Anyway, it's not really a war, is it? We just wipe out a city or two, fire a few missiles just to show them who's the boss, and the whole thing'll be over." He sipped and pursed his lips at the hot liquid.

"You know what is means if we fire the missiles?" Paterson stared appealingly at Water. "You know, don't you?"

"Everyone knows. We only fire after headaches have started. We destroy a few locations and, in return, they blast our country in return. So we smash them." Water shrugged. "I don't quite know the tolerance-limits of radiation, but I do know that we alone could poison the atmosphere. If we fire it means the end of the human race."

"You see?" Paterson was sweating. "You can't fire the missiles."

"Can't?" Theme grinned. "Aren't you forgetting something? That's just what you've been for." Deliberately he put down his cup. "I've been stuck in this place for four months now and, in all that time, you've watched my every move, my every word and gesture. And for why? Just to see that I stayed capable of doing my job. Well, I can do my job and I'm willing to do it. This time we're the losers, Gregory and me, and you head-shrinkers can take a back seat."

"You're making a slight mistake, Theme," said Waters quietly. "We watched you only to make sure that you wouldn't fire the missiles."

"I'm not firing them. I'm only the boy around here. It's the Big Brain who will really set them off."

"Justification," said Waters doubtfully. "You can't argue with him, Paterson. He feels no guilt as what he proposes doing. It's a case of glorified back-pedaling. He takes orders and blames the man who issues them. The man who issues them probably solves his conscience by telling himself that he won't really be the one to fire the missiles. It's easy to kill if you don't have to pull the trigger."

"I don't get this." Theme seemed genuinely bewildered. "All this time you've been checking up on me and Gregory here, and now that it's time to do our job you don't want us to do it. I don't understand."

"It's simple, really," said Waters. "Everyone, especially everyone who claims any intelligence as all, knows just what an atomic war will do. Anything is better than that. Anything. Fools who mouth words about
quies custodem.

rather killing the race than accepting what they are pleased to term ‘slavery’ aren’t intelligent. They have no right to indulge the fan of others. But something, I don’t know what, has given everyone a false comfort. Somehow, even though we know what animals can do, we don’t worry about it. As a psychologist I find it interesting to speculate just why that should be.”


“Were you a victim of fake education?” Waters stared at his fellow psychologist. “Up until now you seemed perfectly willing to maintain the stuff of the Slaves at optimum level. Now you, as Thorne has pointed out, seem to want to undo all your work. Why?”

“I don’t know.” Paterson squirmed in his chair. “I don’t know.”

“I have a theory,” said Waters. “I believe that the human race will not be destroyed. Somehow it will save itself, in spite of itself, or because of itself. No race with such a tremendous survival potential, and ours is fantastic in that, could deliberately destroy itself.”

“I can’t see where your ‘survival potential’ comes into it,” snapped Paterson dryly. “We’ve done a pretty good job of killing ourselves for all of recorded history.”

“Nonsense!” Waters glanced at the other man. “I’m surprised at you, Paterson. What is Man? He isn’t prolific as rabbits are, and so doesn’t survive that way. He isn’t fanged or armed and didn’t survive that way. He has a brain, yes, but he had to start, and, even with a brain, he was still subject to attack from other animals as well as an assortment of diseases unknown to any other species. And yet we have survived. Men die but Man does not die. Instead we have increased and spread, built and developed and are now on the threshold of still further expansion. Why is that? The average man is no genius and even the specialists are really ignorant in the essential things. Could the builders of this Station have grown their own food, or processed it, or woven their own clothing?”

“Of course not, but that is irrelevant.”

“I think not. I think that there is something unique to the race. Jung touched it when he spoke of ‘racial consciousness’ but I believe it is deeper than that. That is why I am not worried. I refuse to believe that such a race could deliberately destroy itself.”

“You are hoping for a miracle,” said Paterson bitterly. “You are two thousand years too late.”

“Not a miracle,” corrected Waters gently. “Merely a medium of reality.” He turned, as they all did, towards the drowsing attention signal from the radio.
It was warning red. Somehow they had all expected it, but hearing the cold, impersonal tones from the speaker made it horribly real. Warning red which meant that somewhere down on Earth someone was preparing to open the final conflict. Final, that is, if the Station played its part of Avenger.

Waters stared at the instruments now lit by the glowing symbols of the designated cities. Spots of light shone on the master image, repeated on the smaller screens as the computers plotted the flight of the missiles. All that was needed was the command from Base followed by the obdurate pressure of a few men and death would streak from the bounding tubes towards the planet. A nervous could operate the Station if he knew which button or lever did what. Any person with the ability and intelligence to drive a car. Certainly any of the four men in the control room.

And if they didn’t?

“Traitor! A ‘traitor’ could well be a traitor because a traitor is merely a person who does not do as others dictate. No man could ever really be a traitor to himself, not if he did what he believed to be right. And no man could possibly be a traitor if by so being he was instrumental in saving his men.”

Waters was halfway out of his chair when he heard the sound of the blow.

“Stay where you are.” Gregory stared at the two psychologists. Thorne a crumpled figure at his feet, the fingers of his left hand automatically rubbing the strip knuckles of his right.

“What are you going to do?” Paterson seemed to be sitting on fish-hooks.

“Sit still.” Waters put out his hand and pushed Paterson back into his seat. “He knows what he’s doing.”

“Not the Station! I . . .”

They all felt the lurch as the stabilizers whirled into life. On the big screen the image of Earth seemed to quiver as the manual controls overrode the automatics. Then, slowly, it began to move aside and be replaced by the starlit splendor of space.

“Don’t interfere with me,” warned Gregory. “I know what I’m doing.” He stooped forward so Earth slipped aside, his hand on the firing lever. Abruptly he threw it and, through the sound of the structure, the transmitted sound of the released missiles increased into a dull throb of sound.

“They’ll miss!” Waters kept his arm against Paterson.

“They’ll better.” Gregory kept his hand on the control. “Not much movement with the stabilizers but they should blow clear.” His
voice rose above the throb of sound from the launching tubes.

"Satisfied?"

"You had a breakdown," hobbled Paterson. "You weren't responsible. We are both aware to that. In a way it's our fault for not asking for a replacement sooner. You won't be alone, Gregory, I promise you that."

"And Thorne?"

"I had forgotten Thorne." Paterson stared wildly about the room.

"Could we...?"

"No." Gregory straightened as the last of the missiles sped from the station and harmlessly into space. "Reaper, what I've done. Once they know the station is an empty threat, or an empty boat, they will forget their war—I hope."

"They will forget." Waters rose as Paterson ran towards the radio.

"You know what will happen to you, don't you?"

"I can guess."

"Paterson was right when he said that we should share the blame. They won't be gentle with you."
"It doesn't matter. Before they can reconquer the station the other nations will have destroyed it. Once they know it no longer threatens them they will lose their antagonism." Gregory shrugged. "Better ask Base to get you off before that happens."

"Don't worry about us." Waters stared intently at the younger man. "Why?"

"What made me do it?"

"Yes."

"I don't know." Gregory looked down at Thomas as if seeing him for the first time. "I mean that, I just don't know." He tried to smile.

"I must have gone a little insane. One minute I was checking the firing patterns, the next..." He shrugged. "Not that it matters now. It's too late for regrets."

"Yes," said Waters quietly. "It's too late for anything."

For a moment they stood looking at each other, then, without a word, Gregory turned and left the room. Waters didn't call after him. Not even his professional curiosity could justify him stopping Gregory from doing what had to be done. A quick end, a clean death, the only thing now left to him. But he would like to have known.

Had Gregory also been plagued with dreams? The ravaged planet, the hopeless sky, the enigmatic female figure? Or had it been something deeper than mere dreams? Could there be a racial instinct which took control whenever the race was in real danger of total extinction? Waters didn't know. He would never know, but one thing he was sure of. The blonde had stepped screaming.
Question Answered

The answer was simplicity itself—which was the very reason he could not be allowed to see it.

Illustrated by Martin Frey

“What is a man?”

“A man is . . . .”

The vibrant hum of life filled the vast machine. Silently changing patterns of light danced across the printed circuits. The muted whirring of memory banks echoed faintly within the metal walls.

It stood four-square on sunken concrete piles, resilient pads, and isolated mating; an intimately charted expanse shielded in plated metal.

Johnston sat in the answer screen like a cat at a mousehole; a cat that knew the mouse would never come out.

Then the humming stopped abruptly. There was a scintillating flash of static in the cool depths of the screen; the overload fuse had blown.

And that, thought Johnston bitterly, is that! Ask a damned silly question—and you’ll get a damned silly answer. Man is a flash of static on a viewing screen—the cold hand of death on an eager machine.

He looked up at the dead monster and sighed.

Then Margret was at his elbow, pressing across to look at the tape, shooting instructions to the small group of technicians, flicking switches . . . The picture of a confident man—one who knew that he knew his job.

He turned to Johnston now, his earnest enthusiastic features toward the other, the mocking Latin face impishly tossing a thousand nuances on the flood of words.
"The machine did not answer? It must be the plumbing—the data. She has never overloaded before. Never! What is this question you ask? Why am I not told? I do not like this way of working."

He shrugged impatiently. "Orders! Always orders! What am I? Only a poor engineer. I could not understand matters of policy."

Then the fine scorn in his voice vanished and Johnson ceased to be an audience; the engineer's tone softened. "But you are not happy either. I am sorry. We live to please; my machine and I."

Johnson patted the grayness into a corner of his mind and smiled.

"It's not your fault," he said, "nor the machine's. It's the question."

"Then. . . ?"

"Ask another? Change the approach?"

Margot nodded. The words were heavily drawn from his lips.

Johnson shook his head. "We've asked others before. This is basic. A four-letter phrase?"

He stepped abruptly, realizing that his finger was running away with him. The depression was making him careless. He nodded curtly at the other and walked away.

Margot watched him a moment, then shrugged, and turned back to his machine. It was predictable.

A deep room; stretching from the modest summer of a great curved window back into the artificially lit depths of the building's interior. A high room; yet literally a thousand feet above the city; sheltering distant mountains through the other, chilled, upper air.

Johnson walked down the room from winter into summer. He walked slowly with downward head watching the pattern of the carpet lining the floor.

A man came from a door at the window and came towards him; a silhouette heightened at the edges, then fading into obscurity.

"Another failure."

It wasn't a question—just a simple statement.

Together they crossed to the window and looked down on the city. The wavy threads of steam leaped the sparkling splendor of the buildings; light gleamed and gleamed in a million reflections.

"You like this view," said the other abruptly—almost accusingly—"to Johnson."

"Yes," came the simple answer; "it's the greatest view in the world for a man."

"It's good for the ego." There was a dry bitterness in the other's tone that stopped the words of mourning and drove the pleasure a vessel
of despair.

He turned to his desk and sat down, pulling a book towards him. The pages turned and fell beneath his touch with an empty sound. Johnston joined him reluctantly.

"That was the last of the mechanical ones," he said.

The other's gray, gaunt and features beat silently over the book.

"There's always Jessel," continued Johnston desperately. "But he'll have to be told. He's not like the others.

The gray man turned towards him.

He looked like a dead world spinning in an empty void, thought Johnston. The surge to raise his companion drowned in his brain. He forced a smile.

"We've searched the likely places, and that's never where the answers are. Jessel is trustworthy. I'll go and see him."

The gray man nodded and pushed the book neatly aside.

"You can always try," he said.

Jessel lived in the mountains, as far from the city as he could decently get. His home was simple—by city standards—a transparent canopy of plastic covering a small plateau.

Johnston edged the helipad gradually, looking for a flat open piece of land. There was none—the dome covered the whole plateau. Angerily he jerked the vehicle around and circled outwards, about a quarter of a mile away he found a spot and landed.

He walked upwards and inwards over the rough ground, stumbling a little towards the end of his journey. Through the naked walls he could see Jessel, recognized from the dim, time-worn picture in his mind. He was standing beside a large tank quite near the wall, when Johnston rapped impatiently.

The wall turned opaque in an instant, wrapping the vivid figure in a milky cloud.

Johnston was startled; not at the blinding operation, but at the possible motive behind it. A dark fire chittered at his heart. What if Jessel didn't want to see him? Didn't want to help?

Then he remembered the Jessel of his youth; the man who hated machines, but loved humanity. Jessel would help—if he could.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" asked a voice from behind the milky screen.

"My name is Johnston. I come from the President. You knew me in the old days . . . at Santa Rosa . . ."

The canopy rose like a morning mist and curled the barriers with
it. Josse stepped towards him.

"John," he said, "it's been a long time."

They sat under the next line of the plastic sky and talked. Josse watched the other carefully, placing his request in his mind; repeating, reforming; waiting for the right moment.

At last the echoes of reminiscence died and the time was opportune.

"I've come to you for help," he said diffidently. "There's a question we must have answered."

Josse smiled. "A question? Are there any left? What about your machines, John? They know all the answers—if you ask them properly. That's what you said in the old days."

A bitterness crept into his voice. "How you loved the pomp of metal! the hard authority of x and y and z; the inimitable equations! Have you lost your faith?"

"It will come," said Johnston, carefully controlling his anger, "but the machines must have the data. We need the answer urgently; if we're to break the Cycle," he paused. "The Crisis is due within the next few years."

"So soon?"

"We've analysed the rhythm," said Johnston.

Josse laughed shortly. "Your machines are good for jobs like that; they just love complex functions. Why can't they tell you how to stop it?"

The question cracked in the still air like a whip. Johnston heard it distantly. He was thinking of the Cycle... The rise and fall of a thousand empires; the inherent instability of civilization. Man, striving in the depths, struggling upwards; conquering his environment; building his monuments in stone and bronze and steel—until he broached the storm... How many civilizations had gone before? The machines knew. They'd analysed the data—the early products of bygone ages, the tiny scales—and produced the Cycle. There was an upper limit to civilization. Reach this limit and the structure crumbled. And Man must start again.

This much everyone knew; for Johnson had published his results many years ago. But what they didn't know—for it had been quietly suppressed—was the imminence of the present Crisis. Johnston and a chosen few had worked feverishly and secretly to solve the problem. But the machines could give no method of breaking the Cycle. They'd analysed and correlated... and said the data was insufficient.
They'd asked a crucial question in their hard metallic voices: "What is a man?"

Jondal was talking. "I guessed when I read your results five years ago that something was wrong. The paper was unusual for you—too vague. I waited for the follow-up, and when it didn't come..." He shrugged. "It was all too obvious."

Johnston finished. "It was all we could do," he said defensively. "Presumptive knowledge would only have precipitated the Crisis."

"And what was your question?" asked the other.

"What is a man?"

Jondal threw back his head and laughed. His teeth flashed white and staring in the strong dark face.

"What is a man?" he asked. "The unknown in all your equations, John! A chemical compound! Action and emotion!"

He fixed the other still smiling. "That's only one question. There are ten thousand million men. That's ten thousand million questions."

"No!" said Johnston quickly, biting the pen in his hand. "That's still an underlying attitude that is common to them all—there must be!

"We've got to find that essence to complete the data. Without it the machines are powerless."

"And so you came to me?"

"Yes."

"Why?" asked Jondal. "Am I the only one to look for another approach? to spur your mental monsters? I work alone. I haven't published a paper for years."

"That's why," said Johnston eagerly. "Everything else is in the machines by now. If the answer was there we'd have found it. But there may be a clue in your recent work."

"I have an answer."

Johnston looked at the graven features in a disbelief that faded gradually into hope. It isn't possible, he thought. But he studied the man before him, and knew with sudden certainty, that it was.

"But you can't use it," said Jondal.

"Why?" asked Johnston with soft impatience. "Why?"

"You have the answer inside you," said Jondal. "Shall I show you?"

Johnston moistened his parched lips and nodded.

He lay in the large tank on a bed of plant pudding. Jondal looked down on him and spoke:

"Two injections then I'll close the tank."

"What will happen?" asked Johnston nervously. He thought
QUESTION ANSWERED

It's a psycho-probe. You've seen one before. They're used in psychodrama to avoid any patient-doctor reaction. It asks questions—and you answer. The drugs are merely used to remove any inhibi-

tions.

"Will I know what has happened when I'm released?"

"I'll be recorded."

Johnson felt the needle pierce his arm... once... twice...

He lay and waited.

A soft, lazy warmth spread through his body, and his surroundings faded so imperceptibly that he barely noticed the lid of the tank closing, blanketing him in utter darkness.

A small voice spoke in his ear, a vibration in the dark around him.

He answered uncertainly—a thought into the ether.

The thought returned... "Logical... sensible..."

He rejected it.

The small voice spoke again...

The gathering rhythms of question and answer reverberated across the emittance; burning down upon him; eroding the firming field of knowledge; taunting at his subconscious.

He fell helpless into a great abyss; tossed on the pulsing beats...

"Feeling better now?"

A form hovered over him and crystallized abruptly. It was Josel holding a cup towards him.

He sat up slowly and painfully, the memory of emotions muddling at his mind. He took the cup and drank. The cool liquid eased his body, and the ache in his brain faded. Memory flooded back.

"The answer..."

"It's all there," said Josel quietly. "As logical as the human mind can make it. No man can ask for more."

They listened to the tape in the open air. Johnston relaxed in his chair and drank in the clear, fresh air thankfully. The voice from the speaker seemed distant and surreal, like an intrusion from another dimension.

"Was I in there long?" he asked abruptly.

Josel shrugged. "About an hour. You knew a lot of answers."

He passed. "Shall I turn to the end?"

"No."

But the frequency of the responses was slowing gradually—an edge appearing on Johnson's voice. He started to sweat.
NEBULA

There was a click and a sudden flicker of sound.

"I think you had better just hear the last part," said Josel.

He opened his mouth to reply—and froze as the recording slowed to listening speed. A voice was uttering in his ears—his voice! His felt remembered term till his mind—and then the words and meaning slowly penetrated his understanding.

Josel stared in pityingly.

"Your conclusion," he said. "Can you find it in the machines? A mediator is a tool—a tool to deal with our environment. It's never a beyond it's comprehension. If it isn't... it's no longer a machine.

"To give that answer to the machine would be giving away your birthright—our birthright. There are no tools to change humanity. It must change itself.""
ERI C FRANK RUSELS

Down Rover Down

Man was to find everything he didn’t expect on Mars. Even a reception committee?
Illustrated by Harry Turner

He’d gone two-thirds of the way when it happened. There was no reason to expect it. The Moon had been won and Venus conquered, ships lost and masters made, experience gained and lessons learned. Now he was bulling to Mars in a vessel vastly superior to the first Moon-boats. Everything that could be anticipated had been taken into account and guarded against. In theory the odds were proportionately greater in his favour.

But there are and always will be things no man can foresee. Confinement of the Moon and mastery of Venus represented humanity’s expansion inwards, towards the Sun. This, the first Mars-flight, was the first thrust outwards, away from the Sun and moon of life leading for the great concourse of stars. That made all the difference, an immensely significant difference that no expert had taken into account, no ingenuity could overcome.

So at the two-thirds point he hit the blanking arm and dived into it unaware. The engine continued to run without failure or cause. Nothing was visible save the hazy mist of stars and the pink target slowly swelling ahead. No strange body made a blip upon his fluorescent screen, no other flare-tail was detected by his thermoecopes.

Two moons had become visible to the naked eye before it dawned upon him that all was not well. First he noticed that the output meter of his pulse transmitter was registering zero despite that the apparatus seemed to be functioning. Back on Earth they were depending on that constant emission to keep radio-trails of a body too small to be followed with telescopes. Without it they lost him unless he reported to the vocal beam and used it long enough to enable them to take new bearings.

Hastily he switched on the main transceiver, spoke through his larynx microphone. “Do you still get my beacon, Earth? Do you still get my beacon?”
He repeated it at least twenty times. In all probability the answer would be unintelligible, a distorted muttering amid a mass of static. But any response at all would serve to show that he had been heard. He strained at his ear-phones and picked up nothing, not a sound, a voice, a murmur. Not even hum or noise, backwash or the faint hint of solar energy.

"Earth calling! Earth calling! Do you hear me, Earth? How is my beacon? Come in, Earth, and say whether you are getting my beacon?"

No reply.

On this transmitter, too, the output needle should have waggled in sympathy with the varying amplitude of his voice. It did not stir by a hairbreadth. He checked feed-back, found nothing wrong. Power was pouring in, none squinting out. There was a transmitter-meter among his numerous servicing instruments but how could he be sure that? One cannot control a racing motor while partially dismantling and repairing a jigsaw puzzle of radio components. The tester was strictly for use when landed and not before.

By the looks of it he was going to skid through the red dust of Mars while those who had sent him were mourning his end. To their minds sudden silence could mean only one thing: namely, dinner born of causes unknown.

Surely he was going to experience a major triumph they could not share because the means of sharing had been denied them. The ones lay upon him to restore communication immediately after landing. He would do his best but wasn't sure of it. He was a space-pilot rather than a radio expert. No man can be master of every conceivable skill.

A couple more times he called without slightest response. Definitely the link to Earth was broken and had been broken for quite a while. He'd no way of telling how long.

Further efforts were futile because the landing now was too close at hand. He thrashed across the orbits of Phobos and Deimos with the vast face of Mars stretching far beyond the capacity of the observation-port. No time to study the face, not a moment to spare for curious examination. It took all his strength, ability and single-minded concentration to bring the ship down without damage.

The Martian horizon swayed across the port as he swung the ship into a shrinking orbit around the planet. He took her round three times before velocity, angle of inclination and nature of terrain were all just right. The vessel belly-skidded along a flatland that was not red but gray-green with a thick carpet of lichen. The tail-end rose ceased for
the first time in many, many days. This was it; the hour of victory, the long step toward the Asteroid Belt, the Outer Planets, another solar
sphere, an endless, uncountable multitude of worlds.

Yet he did not bask with the glory of it, jump around, wave flags,
sing songs. He lounged in his seat, sweating and exhausted. Now was
the moment that would inscribe his name in history books in letters of
gold but like all such moments it proved strangely mundane, hum-
drum, lacking in great thrill. The tension, of course, following a long
period of intense nervous strain. The aftermath.

A few minutes elapsed by before he recovered and stood up for a
better look through the port. He gazed with sleepy-eyed lack of com-
prehension at a dark circle across the lichens, the shadow of something
huge and round standing alongside his ship.

His eyes were equally reluctant to register when they heard an
authoritative hammering upon the airlock door.

The control-cabin’s ports permitted a field of view covering a frac-
tion less than one-eighth of a degree. There were no other vantage points
from which to look around, no side-ports, no vision possible from the tail.
He could stand by the instrument-board and survey a great sweep of
alien territory that included nothing alongside or behind the ship. To
see the rest he must blow the steering-jets lengthly and with enough
power to edge the vessel around, wasting precious fuel and risking serious
damage to the spacecraft shell. Seven hundred tons grinding through
an arc of ninety degrees would be more than enough to tear the belly-
skins from the body.

Alternatively he could go out through the airlock and take a look
in person. He’d intended to do that very soon. If all had gone as
planned he’d have deemed a closed-circuit oxygen mask, takes a colour-
plate camera with him, set the instrument on his tripod and made a record
of himself posing by the ship. The picture of the year if not of the
century.

But all had not gone as planned. The veteran advisers of Lunar and
Venusian expeditions had no ceased to expect what was taking place right
now. They had provided instructions and advice, food, water, drugs,
oxygen, signalling apparatus, instruments, weapons, every possible scien-
tific contribution toward survival and success.

The one thing not provided was a safe way of answering the door
when somebody—or some thing—knocks.

What’s the answer to that? There are two and only two. Open the
door and take a chance. Or stay in and sit tight, perhaps for ever.
Could it be a 

NEBULA

The social politics keep the entire magnetic field

entirely in the presence of a single model and a test bed.

We refer to the phenomenon as a magnet.

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the dome could produce a ladder at a moment's notice and position it in readiness. There was something dreamtike about this, in that night-

thump hard into the rim he stood out, saw the man waiting at the bottom of the ladder.

It was anti-climax with a vengeance. A mere man. A plain, ordi-
nary man who looked as if he might be the corner grocer in his Friday

boat. The man stood up at him with a slightly effusive air while he

looked down in open imprudence.

There was compensatory shrivelling in what stood behind the man,

the thing that had cast its shadow like a menacing promise of coming
evils. A great silver globe of thermometer twice the length of the Earth-
ship. A monster mad ball with copper-coloured rings protruding from
its surface in symmetrical array.

The first thought that whirled through his mind was a natural pro-
duct of the environment in which he had developed. “Some other nation
has built this to it. We’ve made it too late.”

Further speculation was halted when the man down below said
pointedly and in perfect English, “Why the gin?”

Carlow eyed the weapon as if it sat in his head and answered con-

fusiously, “Why not?”

“Use create gone,” said the other. “And chances get shot.” He

made a gesture. “Well, you’ve come all the way here. Are you satisfied
merely to stare at it from up there? Don’t you want to stand on a new

world?”

“Obviously I won’t be the first. I am disappointed.”

“So are we,” said the man. “And likely to remain so for some

contingencies come.”

“What if you mean? Having got here ahead of me you should be

overjoyed.”

“That is not viewpoint. There are others.”

Firming his lips and absorbing oxygen through his nostrils, Carlow

smiled that remark thus: “I can think up a reason why you knocked
for a neighbourly child.”

“What is that?”

“Your ship is out of action and unable to return. The arrival of

mine is a gift from the gods.”

“You won’t get back,” said the man. “Never.”

“It will.”

“Sorry,” the man persisted with strange self-confidence. “But you

are mistaken.”
"I don't think so. Stick around and watch me take off."

With that he pointed his gun at the other and started backing into the lock, his left hand stretching to close the door.

The man on the ground made a brief signal to the great metal globe. Carlows shot out of the lock, drawn by a dozen irresistible pulls. The gun was torn from his hand as he dived, the second weapon was ripped from its holster. His arm was hauled forward as his wristwatch fell itself loose. All the buttons leaped from his uniform jacket.

He landed flat on a thick cushion of fabric, gasped for breath, picked himself up. A ragged hole showed in the left of his pants where a small bunch of keys had taken the shortcut from out of his pocket. It wasn't until he came erect that he realized the mask had vanished along with the rest.

His opponent was facing him tondering the mask with one hand while holding a perforated gun in the other. He took the mask, fitted it on. His task was dotted, out of the straps broken, but it was wearable and still functioning. His drew oxygen thankfully.

"You won't need that thing in due time," assured the other, watching him.

Carlows gobbled and said nothing.

"Unfortunately though, I need this." He gestured with the gun.

"I have to deal with you in the only manner your kind understands, namely, with a weapon. Get walking."

"What?"

"Round to the other side of our ship. You'll find a gangway. March up it."

"You can go to hell," said Carlows.

"Courage and stubbornness are not the same things," remarked the man, speaking as one would to a child. "Neither is above an effective argument."

"Level of wisdom, aren't you?"

"I pretend to nothing," the other smiled as if at a recent thought, added. "You may call me Harry. One name is as good as another on any world." He wound the gun again. "You can ground on your own feet or be carried. Please yourself."

There wasn't much closer about it. The mononuclear magnetic field that had robbed him of all susceptible metal in essence to a signal proved that there were others in the metal sphere, perhaps a dozen, perhaps twenty or more. At any rate, enough of them to cope with a solitary mule.

With bed grace Carlows walked as told, the man named Harry—
that was his true name—following with weapon in hand. Carlow kept his thoughts to himself and they were plenty. What damage had been done inside his own vault by sudden immersion in so powerful a field? What critical instruments had been put out of action for how long? 

Yours won't get back," the other had said. "Never."

"Supposing it didn't, what then? Was all hope lost? He did not think so. Despite intense nationalistic rivalries, Earth was a world considerately dominated by ultrafast transport systems and vast communication networks. It was well-nigh impossible for any nation-sized group to retain a majesty secret longer than twelve months.

Over there, across the void, three thousand millions were living cheek by jowl, with rumours spreading fast among them, information circulating openly or surreptitiously at top speed. And there was no place to hide for any lengthy period anything so large and highly technical as a space-ward for ahead of its time.

Mere possession of only one such ship implied the existence of an advanced technology backed by formidable industrial resources. Once upon a time, in the long, long ago, a huge complex of factories and laboratories had been needed to produce the first supersonic rocket. Today, with a thing like this globe in plain view, the facilities behind it could be no smaller. It wouldn't take Earth long to learn the sources of this space-conquering tool.

Right now he couldn't hazard a single guess at who had reached Mars first and was acting tough about the holding of it. He probed at the puzzle by trying to determine the nationality or racial characteristics of this fellow Harry. It defied him. Harry was of no readily identifiable type, his speech was devoid of accent and noteworthy only for being mildly correct.

"Up there," ordered Harry as they reached the gangway.

Obediently walking up, Carlow entered a large holdout, stood side by side with his caper while the outer door closed, the inner one opened. He removed his mask, let it dangle in one hand. A nude with the gun sent him into a long metal passage. It was here that he halted, involuntarily paralyzed by sight of one of the crew.

The thing strolled cazazingly from a door on the right, crossed the passage, entered a door on the left. It did not so much as glance at him. It couldn't, because it had no eyes.

It was four feet high, broad, with flexible legs, thin, ribbery arms terminating in digits that had the sinuosity of snakes. There were two
breathing holes and a wide mouth in its green and scaly face, also feathered antennae protruding from its hairless head. It wore clothes of outlandish cut and sported some kind of insignia on the shoulders of its jacket.

Going through the door at this depairing vision, Carlow ejaculated,

"What's that?"

"A Hylane," said Harvy. "He prodded with the gun. "Keep going, You'll see more types before you're through. And in due time you'll get used to them."

He was right. Around the corner another and completely different creature side-stepped into a doorway to let them pass. This one was tall, gray and skeletal. Its brilliant yellow eyes surveyed the prisoner with no surprise, no special interest.

Further along they encountered two more as different again. One was a quadruped with tiny hoofs like a gargoyle. It chattered past with open uncovem, followed by a crawling thing that seemed all eyes and tail.

"Is heem," Harvy ordered, pushing a door open.

Entering, Carlow stood around the tiny cell, hardly heard the door close and lock as Harvy departed. There was no port through which to examine surroundings. A folding seat lay against one wall. Pulling it out, he rested on it, strove to halt the mad whirlings of his mind.

His guess at a disabled first-conter obviously had been a stupid one made in the confusion of the moment. The great globe had not been there when he'd landed, otherwise he could not have failed to see it. Therefore it must have arrived after him, within a few seconds. Such promptness suggested that it had followed him down from some point of embark within the star-sprigled darkness.

Equally as mistaken was his theory of Earth-origin. Convincingly some nation could produce a vessel like this one. But from nowhere in the wide, wide world could it dig up such a crew. So where had the big sphere come? What was its origin? It defied him completely.

He was still bumbling this problem when an upward surge told him that the vessel was lifting. Then it shifted to a side-wise motion. Acceleration was wonderfully smooth, with no thunder of creaks, no vibration through the cell, nothing but a low, almost unhearsable hum. It did not last long. After forty minutes he felt the sensation of dancing, the slight bemp of ground-contact.

Gravitational pull remained the same as before. That told him the ship had not soared to the nearer moon. They were still on Mars.

Nothing happened for another hour during which he mooned imp-fully around the cabin, took an emergency notion from his pocket, ate it
without tasting it. He tried connecting futile plans for escape, most of them violent and bloody. But deep inside himself he knew there was no escape.

Eventually the door opened and Harry entered. "No gun this time," he said. "The need for one no longer exists. We have thrown your weapons away." He mannered Carrlow with sharp gray eyes.

"Don't let that fact tempt you to try anything rash. It will serve only to annoy us."

"Aren't I entitled to be annoyed?" demanded Carrlow.

"No."

"Why not?"

"The question of your rights has yet to be settled. That will be done with the minimum of delay." His expression softened as he went on, "I regret that you have not been given a meal but you may have one now, if you wish."

"I'm not hungry. I could do with a drink, though."

"A stimulant?"

"Preferably."

Harry brought one. It looked like ginger pop, tasted like a mixture of sour-juice and old brandy. Carrlow drank it, said, "Huh?" and felt a
his lecture.

“This way,” ordered Harry.
He led the other along the corridor to the gangway. Nobody passed them on the way. The huge vessel seemed empty, devoid of any other living soul.

Carlow toyed with the notion of jumping his guard while the going was good. It was a strong temptation. He resisted it, deciding to hide his time. A better opportunity might arise later. And he wasn’t dead yet.

Outside, the gangway pointed toward a heavy metal door set in the face of a red rock wall. Together they marched through the doorway, along a wide, smoothly cut passage penetrating deep into the cliff. They reached a large, oval-shaped room with semi-circular tiers of seats rising at one end.

That was where Carlow got the hunch. The seats held an audience the like of which no Earth-born eye had seen before.

Permitting himself to be led to a cushioned bench placed in the middle of the room, he sat and stared stolidly at the assembly. His concentration was such that he was only dimly aware of Harry taking a seat beside him.

There were thirty-eight of them over there. He counted to make sure. Yes, thirty-eight. And no two of them alike. Most had eyes but a few had not. Most had noses and lips but some had other things. Only a couple of them verged on the human-like. One of these had a receding head fixed rigidly to his shoulders. The other was the size of a macaque.

They ran the gamut of size, shape and colour. They surpassed anything in his wildest dreams. And they sat there silently surveying him with judicial calmness.

Harry leaned across and whispered, “Take it easy. I’m official interpreter. I’ll tell you what is going on. Don’t interrupt—it will do you no good whatever.”

The centre figure in the front row stood up, pressed a stud and caused a gong-like note to sound from a metal hemisphere set in the wall. Opening a thin, purplipped mouth, he spoke in abstruse mumbling a wounding him. Harry translated in low tones.

“Friends, again we have to determine right of entry with formality according to law. An example of the alienform concerned sits before you now.” His large, shot-pepped eyes turned towards Carlow. “Being of the same shape and form and familiar with the subject’s language, our brother of the Sirius group will interpret these proceedings for the subject’s benefit.”
DOWN, ROVER, DOWN

"What the hell is all this?" growled Carlow, sagging.
"Hush!" warned Harry. "You'll find out. Be patient."
"Get damn it, do I have to squat here like a lout while — — - "
"Shut up!" Curses and emotion are regarded as symptoms of irresponsible childishness. The least you can do is behave like an adult."

Carlow subsided, scowling.

The speaker continued, "I call upon our brother of the Rigellian group to state the case in favour."

He—or it—sat down. Another stood up, a somewhat reptilian creature holding a wad of papers in a very humanlike hand. The way he cleared his throat before beginning was also human.

This one launched forthwith into a eulogy on the men of Earth. He did not labour it, distort it or kow it with more emotion. He confined himself solely to facts, all of them flattering. He said that during the last two hundred Earth-orbits they had climbed from program stage eleven to program stage seven. He spoke warmly of their many virtues such as care for the aged and the sick, love of honest men, piety, self-sacrifice and so forth. It was a full hour to get through his speech which, in its purely factual way, was an able performance.

Finally he raised his seat and the first speaker arose. "I call upon our brother of the Centurian twin worlds to state the case in disfavour."

Another creature stood up, tall, chameleon-eyed. For some reason best known to himself he was wearing gauze filters in his nostrils. He had no papers, no hands with which to hold any. In a voice near the top of the audio-band he uttered a few words with an air of facility, reassured his seat. Harry did not bother to translate what had been said. Again the first speaker came up. "Friends, you have heard summaries of the cases for and against. Is entry permitted?"

A unanimous, "No!"

"That is the decision of the unselected species," he said. "Let the records be shipped to the central coordinating board as evidence that the law has been observed." His attention shifted to Harry. "Inform the subject that this verdict may be reversed when justification is found in the future."

Harry passed it to Carlow, added philosophically, "That's that!" then conducted him back to the globe-ship and the cables.
"What does all this business mean?" demanded Carlow.

"It means the time isn't yet. Earthmen are banned from free space."

"How are you going to stop them, eh? It won't be easy, I can tell you that!"
Smiling, Harry said, "We'll presume your ship and let it crash upon Earth. The time, place and direction of fall will show that it met disaster, drifted seaward, was pulled into Earth's gravitational field. What we have done to the ship will baffle and alarm your scientists. They'll require many years to evolve a theory to account for it, more years in which to devise a hoped-for cure. They won't send another vessel until they have solved the problem—or think they've solved it."

"What about me?"

"If we were of your kind," Harry told him, "we would deal with you swiftly and effectively. We'd take you out upon the suns, give you a minute for prayer and put a bullet through your brain."

"Why should you? I've done you no harm."

"Very true," Harry agreed. "That's how we see it, too. Therefore you will be transferred to a nice, lush world which we have reserved for those who know too much, those men we would not kill but must keep out of harm's way. Your life will be idyllic—but to Earth you will be dead."

Sitting on the edge of the bunk, Carlow thought it over. He cared little for his own predicament. All space-pilots are men easily and willingly to face the worst, come what may. They are unoffensive with regard to themselves. But this arbitrary condemnation of Earth's three thousand millions was something else. The more he thought of it the more it chafed him.

"That hostile nightmare said something about us," he remarked.

"What was it?"

"I'd rather not tell you."

"Come on, out with it. Surely I have a right to know. If it's undeserved criticism, why can't I answer it? They didn't give me that chance, did they? Do you call that a fair trial?"

"He made a statement that only we can confute and you cannot deny."

"Well, what was it?" Carlow insisted.

Looking uncomfortable, Harry said, "He stated that you are the only known lifeform that systematically slaughters its own young."

Regathering bitterness, Carlow snapped, "That doesn't make dogs of us. Even if we haven't learned to keep the peace we are smart and tough and we keep going. Man's a rover, isn't he?"

"Down, down, down!" said Harry.

He went out, closed the door. The click of its lock sounded like the crack of doom. Within an hour the ship lifted, taking yet another undesirable specimen to a planetary haven that was also a penal colony.

ERIC FRANK RUSSELL
Sunset

Illustrated by Harry Turner

Aston Rand considered that the funeral service which Nisb had chosen was one of the most tasteful he had ever witnessed. Different from the sentience schism of the old Catholic ritual and far more colourful than the new Unity Credal with its emphasis on sterility and hurry.

The man they were burying sat erect in a small pew halfway between the podium and the congregation, listening avidly to the glib words summing up his life and achievements. His head probably was filled with hope before the service, Rand guessed. It was the humane way and saved embarrassment.
The service was coming to a close. Reading from prepared notes, the preacher flung his voice about the high-backed stool like a caged song-bird. One of the dancing girls sitting behind him performed a performance yawned and her neighbour stretched briefly. Evidently Nell’s hadn’t been able to afford a top-line troupe—the whole funeral must have cost him plenty—but Rand offered that the girls hadn’t been all that bad. Some second string troupe showed as much decent emotion as they were clothed.

A muffled hiccup from the stranger sitting beside him again made Rand feel a regret that he hadn’t provided himself with a bottle and tube dispenser. The brief invasion of outside feelings passed as the preacher wound up for his final peroration.

“...And then, in the flower of his manhood, Nells Whitcombe suffered a tragic accident which cut short his career. His loss of usefulness to the State is great.” The preacher paused and his hand swung meaningly to encompass the stool. He went on, his voice a judicious blend of sorrow and lauding confidence: “Under the wise laws promulgated by the benevolent State, Nells Whitcombe, no longer an asset to society but a drugging handicap, must make way for the unborn generations yet to come.”

There was a stir and a shuffling of feet from the body of the stool. Rand leaned forward on the conformably upholstered pew. An expec-

ant tension built up in the stool.

This was the moment when fireworks might explode, when the man they sat together to bury might take back, might refuse, might do any of a dozen abnormal things.

Despite himself, Rand looked towards the single black-uniformed policeman sitting unobtrusively in the shadows by the purple-draped exit archway. The policeman rose to his feet. Rand shot a swift glance at Nells and felt a stinking sensation of relief as his friend stood up and walked a few paces, quite steadily, towards the arch. Rand was deeply affected by the ceremony. When Nells turned and his wife and child, sitting in the front pew, waved, Rand swallowed and the dryly brown and yellow walls of the stool seemed lit up by the funnel’s single digit.

Ness would look after Nell’s wife and child, might even assign them another husband and wife. For a moment Rand could share their con-

fused and stormy emotions and then, like everyone else in the stool, his attention was taken and held by the clair, belltones of a great organ vibrating from the rafters. Again Rand felt pleasure at the thorough-

ness of Nell’s organization. The organ recording was superb. Voiced
in that expanse of limpid sound, Nells parted the purple drapes and passed through the final archway leading out of this life. What lay beyond, between this moment and the time when what was useful of Nells' physical body was spread as fertilizer to enrich the ground, Rand did not know. That it was nothing to fear he was confident; beyond that simple end he had never troubled to look.

In a make-up-flapped line the dancing girls would show the side, smiles painted firmly on blank faces, undulated out of the starch. The pruners gathered his notes. Rand discovered his cigarette had gone out and pulled another self in until the smoke came cool and fragrant. People were standing up and stretching. Sharp wooden noises spattered from the back of the starch. The policeman had disappeared.

Rand gave his order for two postcard-size photographs of Nells and had to show his authorization allowing him two pictures in place of the usual one. "Whitcombe was the son of a close friend of my father's," he told the clerk. The man sniffed suspiciously, but took the order. The starch was emptying now, taking on that was, dusty look of deserted public halls.

His went out into the sunshine, reflecting on the Eastern, simple beauty of this expression of life, the referendum and inevitability of it all. "The sun was setting across the city and there was a hint of evening in the air. He hailed a geyrosh, wondering if Nells would care to visit his father this evening and mentally preparing answers to her excuses. Nells was a good wife. She knew, but she had her moments.

And his father had never really got on with Nells, not since the time when Nells had wanted Rand's sister Avis to go to State Polytechnic and had been told to mind her own business. Rand chuckled at the memory of these years—State Polytechnic. He had never fared very prominently in the Rand family history—and swung around his geyrosh.

He dislodged his destination and hit the starter button which closed the door with a smack of compressed air and sent the geyrosh bounding into the air on a robot-controlled course for the city. A glance at his watch confirmed that Nells would be home now and he put a call through to the Sinos housing unit, a single room type; when they were allowed children they would be assigned a larger unit.

Nells's voice was the clipped efficient voice of the typing supervisor. Rand often felt a vague sympathy for her pool of jobs. Now, he pritned, conscious that he could change that impersonal tone at the appropriate moment.

"It went off all right," he said suavely. "Old Nells looked quite pleased with the arrangements."
“Well, I hope you think it was worth an afternoon off, Alex,” Rand crooned. “Netta and I were friends, Netta. I couldn’t let him go without saying goodbye.”

“I should think the loss of half-a-day’s pay more important,”

“What do you think the men at the yards would say if I hadn’t gone? After all, Netta was one step ahead of me —.”

“And there’s a good chance you’ll get his job.” Netta smiled at the idea. “If you think it wise to go, create a good impression.”

“It wasn’t because of that!” Rand forced himself to calm down, knowing that his display of temper made it appear certain that that was just why he had gone. As for Netta, well, she wanted a child and Rand couldn’t blame her for that. He said slowly, “I can’t explain it, Netta. It’s one of those things.”

He felt thankful that State had not as yet installed videophones in the gyromills—he didn’t particularly want to see Netta’s face at this moment. Although he could visualise the full lips’ cynical droop and the pullled expression of her face well enough. He brushed the unwelcome thoughts aside and said with more warmth than he intended: “I’m going round to see father to-night. Thought I’d go straight there.”

“What about me?”

“You could join me there. It’s a long time since I’ve seen him.”

“You know I wanted to see the Martian Sandshoes—real people on the stage for the first time in ten years. Can’t it wait?”

Rand had to make a conscious effort to prevent himself from snubbing Netta. He roused his mind of the visions of Netta’s full lips pouted in that disapproving pout that so often clouded his resolution. He’d been far too long since he’d seen his father, quite apart from the photo of Netta.

“I promised to take along Netta’s photo,” he said. “And working on control Central Panel and living alone in Widowman’s Row father would welcome a talk with another man. You know how lately top-notch electronics men are.”

“Your father’s just an old left-over has-been,” Netta said bitterly.

“I’ll go to the show alone. Good-bye.”

Rand was left looking at the dead receiver. He put it back and shook his head. Determined not to allow Netta’s outburst to sour him he sat back in his seat and stared out over the busy city. The stretch was on the outskirts, and as the gyromill filled at three thousand feet the whole sprawling complexes of the city blended the barriers with steel and concrete. Sunshine was caught and flung from towering glass precipices, the air swarmed with midges of gyromills and helmets, television mains
sun over the horizon like a warm, golden orb. The gentle breeze carried the scent of freshly cut grass, a reminder of the cycle of life.

Rand walked slowly along the riverbank, his mind wandering as he watched the water flow. The sound of the water was soothing, and he found himself lost in thought.

A sudden gust of wind blew his hat off, and he reached up to grab it. As he did, he saw the reflection of a familiar face in the water. It was his father, standing on the other side of the river. Rand knew he was dreaming, but he couldn't help feeling a sense of longing as he watched his father's shadowed face.

"Come here, boy," his father said in a voice he recognized. "I have something to show you." Rand took a step forward, moving closer to the water's edge. When he reached it, he saw his father standing there, looking out at the river with a sense of wonder.

"What is it?" Rand asked, his voice echoing in the stillness.

"Look," his father said, pointing to the water. "See how the sun sets over the horizon? That's the way of life. Every day brings a new day, but the cycle continues."

Rand nodded, understanding what his father meant. He knew he had to make the most of every day, just as his father had always taught him. The sun was setting, and he knew he had to get back to his life. But for a moment, he was content to be in the moment, watching the sun dip below the horizon and casting golden light over everything.
all preparations. Then—"

"So it's come at last." Rand felt confused. He could see the violin, lying by his feet, and its melodies echoed in his head, bringing back memories of his childhood, of the family, laughing and full of vitality and springing never a thought to the inevitable day when they would leave it all.

"Guess I'll have a quiet funeral," old Corben was saying. "Can't afford a lavish one, anyway. Y'know, son, since your mother died I've not really cared about much. I'm rather looking forward to the rest," Rand brought his thoughts under control. "'I'll stand to the details, Dad," he said. "Don't suppose you'll want a dancing girl trooper; but I'll hire the best preacher and the finest music—"

"If only you could do it in your own sweet time," his father burst out suddenly. "This 'You've got three days preparation, Master Rand' stuff makes you feel so damned important. Oh, I know it's logical; but it's so cold blooded."

"I don't remember the old days," Rand took out a packet of calling.

"It must have been rather terrible to see cripples, and old helpless people on the street. And to know that somewhere in the world other people were starving for the food those useless mouths were eating. We do things decently to-day."

Corben waved away the offer of a sling and Rand drew in hurriedly.

His hand was shaking, he noticed with mild astonishment.

"That's just it, son."

"We do things decently. I know there's hardly enough food to keep us all alive, that married women are going up to have children. Some Woman, somewhere, is going to be glad I'm dead."

"That's a direct way of putting it—"

"It's true, isn't it?"

"Yes. It's true. If you cannot work then you must give way to those who can. And the next must go on so there must be children. Pray that things don't get so bad that people have to give way just because they are old. Life would be a worse rat-race then than you could imagine."

Corben laughed cynically, the sound a rattle in his husky throat. "I'll come, boy. It'll come." He got off the bed and picked up his violin. "The devil of it is, Auntie, I don't want to die. Not yet, anyway. What man does? I haven't been brought up in the system, the system that balances things so fairly on an ideological edge. State has trained you youngsters well, like Neil, you'll obey the Final Order and walk through the purple anthway, proud and without another thought in your
heads. But for us older folk, it's not so easy."

"I said I'd make the arrangements..."

"Arrangements! I remember the time when the saving of life was the nobler aim, when doctors shoved to keep a man breathing a few extra hours, when Rhema negatives had babies given a whole new blood circulation, when spasms were eased through years of devoted work..."

"But that's all wrong! You're just prolonging the weaknesses of humanity, meshing up trouble for the future."

"I know, son. I know. But it seems wrong to me, somehow, that you shouldn't make any attempt to save a man's life, give him artificial limbs, silver plates, all the fittings, just so you keep him alive."

"And if you save a weakling's life, what about his children? And their children? Rand asked doggedly. "You just infect the human race with disease, spreading it wider and wider instead of cutting it off drastically."

"That's true, I know, and that makes it all the more devilish for me. In a few years time all we old folk will have gone and you can begin to build your world over then. We haven't been brought up to ideas like this, we reject them emotionally, no matter what logic might say. I just don't want to die, not this way, and yet I can't see any alternative."

Rand stood up, feeling awkward and very young. He had never heard his father talking like this before: but then, his father had never before been told that he had three more days to live. It was natural that deeply hidden emotions should come out at such a time. He said diffidently: "I'll come round and see you tomorrow. Let you know what arrangements I've made."

"Goodbye, son." Rand felt a chill at the way his father spoke those words.

Hedlund's Row seemed even more bleak and cold and mournfully uncoiling as he went out. The violin began to sing again.

The Thames yard of Interplanetary Shipbuilders Limited thrummed with activity. Immediately overwalled men pressed buttons and electronic brains were set to implement powered by multi-housepower motors into effortlessly complicated production schedules. Rand had been at his machine for five minutes when the Works Manager called for him. The manager's office was wide and white and full of marble, and a little overpowering to Rand, standing expectantly on the deep-pile rug.

"Yes, sir, the funeral went off well," Rand said, relieved that he
hadn't been called here for a roasting. "Whitcombe had arranged every-
thing erringly."

"Good." The Works Manager was pugilous and flinty, and his eyes-
flashed from blazing pad to ceiling, from telephone to window, and
never met Rand's in an honest look. "A petty scound Whitcombe. He
was a good worker. However, it means that his floor job is vacant and
I'm appointing you to fill it."

"Why—thank you, sir." So he'd got the job! Eleemosyn filled Rand. This
would mean a better housing unit and might mean a child for Neta. His pay
would go up, too.

Some of that chance evaporated on the implication in the manager's
next remarks.

"You'll serve a month's trial period, Rand. I hope that you will
prove suitable. In fact I have every confidence in it. But the Company
cannot take risks and the wrong man in charge here could cost them a
lot of money."

"I understand, Mister Slattery. I'm sure that I can give good ser-
vice." Rand felt it so that, knowing that the manager hoped up Whit-
combe and feeling peremptorily unwilling to give it.

"Well, then, that's settled. Now, Whitcombe had been making great
paids with the new passenger model—the P-One—and I want you to
devote most of your time to the final pre-flight trials. They must be
finished inside three days." Slattery wagged a yellow pencil at Rand.
"You know this model and what the Company hopes to do with it. A
does roundabout that can take a family to Mars or Venus without a
great deal of trouble and is entirely automatic."

"I know, Mr. Slattery," Rand nodded. "It's a great step forward."

"You'll be responsible for pre-flying your sections of the work
and I want that model ready to space in time for overseas buyers the
front office have invited. It's a devil of a nuisance that Whitcombe had
this accident; but his loss is your gain." Slattery looked insight at Rand
for the first time during the interview. Rand met the gaze from Slattery's
cool's eye, but they made him acutely uncomfortable.

"Rand, I know this thing has bitten into your head; but if you run
into trouble, come and see me at once. You understand that, any sort of
trouble at all, come and see me."

Rand caught the distinct suggestion that Slattery meant more than
he was saying. Anyone who promises help in a confidential tone, with
the self-imposed underlining it so thick you can see them press, creates
an awkwardesse, mires the hackles on your neck. Rand coughed and
looked at his feet and felt embarrassed.
“Very good, sir.” He kept his tone formal.

Skinty waved him away and Rand went out, wondering as soon as the door closed what Nettie would say. If he failed this chance of promotion she’d never forgive him. That was for sure. Meanwhile, they’d go on living in their sickeningly familiar housing unit and Nettie would press him even more for money, and there’d be no holding her about having a child. Rand toyed with the idea of not telling Nettie; but then, he shrugged, she’d find out soon enough. She was like that.

The rest of the morning was spent in Nettie’s office, sorting through the dead man’s papers and taking up the pre-flight schedule of P-One where he had hailed so abruptly. The mid-day hoover caught Rand out flat. He’d no idea it was so late, and as he went with the rest of the shift out of the workshop and along to the elevators he quite naturally went with them into the freight elevator. He became conscious of questioning glances, quickly hidden under blank smiles as he looked around.

Then he had it. As a floor foreman he wouldn’t be expected to break minor regulations and ride in the forbidden freight elevators like the workmen. Skinty had betrayed him into a false situation. These minor rules were broken in a habit and Rand thought no more about it than any other workman; now, after being lifted out of the hold, he was reprimanded for thrusting himself where he wasn’t wanted. He rode the elevator down into the basement in a grim silence and was conscious of the snapping of tension as they all walked through into the custom.

The low wide room was filled with the murmur of men and women, their plastic urns sending up a muffled scraping quite unlike the clatter from near skinty’s. The whole expanse of wall and ceiling glowed, the monotonous colour scheme today was pale amber, Rand saw without enthusiasm. He qued up at the foreman’s counter and took his re-issued tray of food.

The break gave him time to think about his father. Family relationships were treasonous things these days and if the Unity Church had its way, as appeared likely, the family as a unit would disappear. What affection could Nettie have for a father-in-law who, merely by living, prevented her from having her child?- 

Rand finished his meal, barely aware of what he had eaten and nonchalantly cleaned the last scrap from the tray. The illuminated signs around the walls were a part of his childhood and environment.

WASTE IS A MORTAL SIN
WASTE NOT THAT THOU BE NOT WASTED
That was a Nevish one, Rand mumbled, and wondered why he never saw the old “Waste not, Want not” around these days.
He was sliding his tray into the dispenser when he saw Vicki Martin. Immediately he had the old feeling. He smiled politely and went on moving along when something about her face—a too-fond smile, a hint of inexpressible strain round the eye, or was it just a trick of lighting—made him turn back. Hell, this nonsense had to end one day. He couldn’t go on forever moping away from his post, from the night-borne, pretending that he’d forgotten her. The limpid green clarity of her eyes that he remembered so well was missing; they were dull and the skin around them was purplish and shining.

“I should congratulate you, Aston.”

“Should you?”

“Well, you’re floor foremen now. We’ll soon be saying goodbye when you go up to the front office.”

He tried to smile at her little joke and fought back the emotion that rushed into his words.

“That’s very good of you, Vicki.” Of course, she wasn’t Vicki Martin anymore. She was Vicki Steinway. “How’s Jack?” he said carefully.

“He’s fine. How’s Netta?” Her tone was impersonal as his, too impersonal.

“She’s fine.”

“I hear you’re pre-fighting P.O. One. I hope you won’t be too hard a loss.”

“You’re working on P.O. One as well?” He was surprised.

“Didn’t you know? Our section is responsible for electronics.”

“I’ll be seeing more of you, then.”

“Yes.” She stopped and Rand sensed the deliberate holding back, the withdrawal of confidence. He knew quite definitely that Vicki was in trouble, and wanted to talk to him about it. He pondered the best way of breaking down that barrier and yet having her some semblance of self-respect.

“And news of Jack’s promotion?” he asked, watching her face, trying to blank out the disturbing impressions that came-like and yet impish face around him.

“Nothing, Aston,” she said miserably. And then it all came out in a rush like a flood stream in spring. “Jack’s awfully near promotion yet. At least another three years—and—Aston, I’m going to have a baby!”

“You’re what?” Rand couldn’t believe. He was profoundly shocked.

“I am. Oh, God, Aston, what am I to do?”

“But you can’t,” he said stupidly. “They don’t allow it.”
They had moved into a room, directly under a notice, and the shadowing on Vicki’s face hollowed her cheeks and brought her eyes out in staring brilliance. Rand saw with pity that she looked years older. He shook his head and said: “You’ll have to tell them and hope for a light sentence.”

“I couldn’t do that,” she whispered. “I want a child badly, so does Jack. We were fools, I know, but—”

“But you’ve committed a crime against State,” Rand said, guiltily aware of the solemnity of his words. “What do you expect me to do?”

“I don’t really know, Antoin. I must have hoped—it doesn’t matter. It’s no concern of yours.”

“Vicki! You know that’s not true. Just give me some time. You’re asking me to break the law. I’ve got to think about it.”

“I’m sorry, Antoin. I shouldn’t have involved you in my trouble, but I had to till somebody, the strain was driving me mad.”

“Don’t, Jack know?”

“No. I’ve been living with this in my mind—”

“All right,” Rand said briefly. “Just stop worrying. We’ll find a way out.” As soon as he had said it he was agitated at the terror of it. What could he do? Vicki could have her child in secret, he might be able to manage that, even with the routine check-ups, probing and prying. But how could they keep it alive, feed it, in some way?”

“You’d help me, knowing you’re breaking the law, still, Antoin?” Vicki’s voice was very soft. Rand curbed deep in his throat and smiled at her arm.

“I’ll help you if I can, Vicki. Just don’t go sick and try to avoid a check-up. You’ve got to jump away from doctors at all costs.”

“I’ve been doing that,” she said shakily. She smoothed her hair back and pressed both hands to her temples. “I feel better already, telling someone.” She looked at Rand. “But don’t get yourself into trouble, Antoin. Promised?”

“I’ll try,” he said grudgingly. “The police are not saints, with how brenters in the question of food-supply, you know that. They’ve had enough of untrustworthy breeding and food shortages. You were a couple of—oh, well, it’s done now. There might be another way out, at that.”

“Oh, no, Antoin. Not that! Please.”

He shrugged. “It’s you I’m thinking of. The longer this goes on the worse it is for you. An immediate statement to the police would have cleared you, earned you a light sentence—of course, Jack would have said goodbye to chances of promotion. Then you’d never have children.”

“That’s what scares me. Jack would be lied.”
The hooter sounded and workpeople began to make for the elevators. Vicki straightened her back and Rand fancied that already some of that strain had gone from her face. He hadn't begun to think of what this meant, he could only repeat over and over in his inner mind that Vicki was in trouble was likely to be dealt with so severely that she'd break under it. The idea frightened him. He took her arm and guided her out of the room and between the long rows of empty tables. What a fool he'd been not to marry her when he'd had the chance; he shifted that train of thought and concentrated on maintaining some equilibrium as they caught up with the returning workers.

"This P-One scheme is a great idea," Vicki said. "There was still a tremble in her voice, a tremble that Rand hoped no one else would detect. He felt like saying "To hell with P-One, Vicki—say Vicki—what can we do?"

Instead, he said firmly: "A brilliant idea, yes. There should be a good sale for family ships. To see the permitted areas of Mars and Venus, walk upon the Moon's surface, the asteroids—I don't expect P-One will have that range, though."

Beside them an engineer turned his head and Rand saw the disillusioned look in his eyes.

"See Mars and Venus? I don't know what the Company thinks they're doing. They should know that won't allow snooping in the prohibited areas. No one goes to Mars and Venus these days without dozens of authorizations and—"

"That's enough!" Rand spoke sharply, conscious for the first time of his increased rank. "What the Company does is decided by the front office and will be carried out with force."

The engineer glared at Rand and then walked swiftly off among the flow of workers, quickly disappeared. Rand forgot him, turned back to Vicki.

She had gone. Rand stopped and the workers crowded past him. He stood alone.

Aanton Rand sat lumpily in his chair staring at the telephone with the evening sunlight shining in the tall windows and casting a glittering sheet across the floor of his office. He was dreading this call to Nesta and unconsciously he took out a packet of cigarettes and drew one. Recollecting where he was he guiltily stuffed it out and returned it to the packet. No use prolonging it any more. He picked up the receiver and asked for his house.
"Please call, Mister Rand?"
"Yes."

There was a pause whilst the operator tuned up Rand's card in the files. Then:
"That's quite all right. You have four more calls left this month."
"Thank you."

Rand waited. The telephone panel flashed, then Netta's bright smile came into focus, her face an animated mask. When she saw who was calling the smile faded. She said:
"Well, Anton. What is it for this evening?"
"You weren't in last night when I went to sleep, Netta, so I couldn't tell you about father." Rand's voice was heavier than he thought. He couldn't help contrasting this empty artificial product of beauty salon with the pudgy worried face of Vicki.
"What about him?"
"Medical gave him three days for —"

"Anton! At last! Well, you can't say it wasn't considerate." Netta was filled with the good citizen's righteousness. "It has to come to us all."
"I suppose so."

"Now, Anton. I don't want any of this stupid old-fashioned nonsense about family love from you again. When the old have reached their time it's best for them to go. I suppose you called to tell me you would be out this evening making arrangements?"
"Yes."
"Well, that's all right, then. I have to see Martha Jorgensen tonight; she has a new smock from Rico and she says it's really divine. Now don't spend too much money on the funeral, Anton, you know we can't afford it."
"We'll afford what I think proper," Rand said, and this time he meant the overtime of furniture to throw. "You may not know what family affection means, Netta, but that doesn't mean that my father's going to a pauper's end." He went on deliberately, ignoring Netta's expression of outward horror. "And I shall be seeing him every evening right up until the finish. So you can fritter your time and money away with your flashy friends. Oh, yes, there'll be more money to spend soon —I get Netta's job."

Netta's painted face crumpled yet another quick-change. "You did, Anton! That's wonderful. I'll go along to the Birth Control Bureau first thing in the morning and tell them our changed status. We should be pretty high on the list."
Rand felt a complete loss at the look in Netta’s eyes. He should never have married her, selfish, heartless, typically a modern woman. Yet she wanted a child and who could say how much she would change if she became a mother? The trouble was that he’d been too weak, too proud to let things drift, too generous ever to make a conscious effort to change the course of his life. Things happened to him instead of happening because of his desires.

“Let’s hope it’s a son, Netta,” he said with genuine feeling. “I might be less. Don’t wait up.”

“Yes, dea. Now don’t forget what I said about spending —

“I won’t. Goodbye.” Rand thrust the envelope back with annoyance. No why did she have to go and spoil it like that? Just when it seemed they were finding some common ground—but no, they had drifted too far apart ever to find their way back. Rand looked round his office, saw that the hands of the clock were straight up and down and thankfully took out a sellotape. The smoke did nothing to soothe him.

All afternoon the problem of Vicki had gnawed at him, insistently in his mind tied up with his father’s approaching funeral. They were each opposite ends of life, the beginning and the end, and yet they both bore dreadful fruit from the same dark tree. Stats knew what it was doing. You couldn’t have a balanced ecology without a little friction. He rose and switched off the lights, closed the door quietly and walked down the darkened shop. He squared his shoulders. Now for the undertaker.

“We can do everything quietly, with dignity, nothing to offend, Mister Rand.” The undertaker spread candle-white hands above the marble-top desk. He flapped open a photograph album. “With this ceremony you have a full symphony orchestra recording, finishing with solo organ. Very nice. And a first-rate troupe of dancing girls, something to make the congregation remember your father for years. Everything respectable, you understand, nothing that —

“I don’t want the dancing girls,” Rand said softly.

“Oh, the price covers them, Mister Rand. They have a new routine —

“I don’t want dancing girls.”

“But they’re in the price.” The undertaker was baffled.

“Look, I’ll pay you the full stuff. But I don’t want a gang of half-naked posturing girls dancing round my father.”

“Mister Rand! My girls are the most efficient, decent, respectable
girl! I don’t allow any of the goings-on that occur at some funerals.”
“I don’t doubt it,” Rand reassured. “Just take them right out of the service. And get a preacher who sounds sincere. I don’t want any of your whining bums making a mockery of my father’s funeral.”

The undertaker was invited. Rand could see that from the way he drew his chin down inside his collar.

“Very well, Mister Rand. I think it understands. If you’ll just sign here . . .”

Rand walked out of the undertaker’s parlor sick of the hollowness of life. Stone knew he was a good citizen. But sometimes, when things happened that could not be explained away by his forefathers’ traditions took over, against all reason, and made him up inside until he couldn’t tell white from black. The journey to Widdow Row did not take him long, but when he stood outside his father’s door he couldn’t remember a single incident since leaving the funeral parlor.

Corbin Rand was entertaining. Sitting chidingly in the chair an old, decayed wig of a man with a defiant white whisker of hair pat down a glass and stared with candle-sharp eyes at Rand.

“More company for you, Corbin. Come on in, boy, and sup some of this purple stuff.”

Rand shut the door behind him, looking questioningly at his father. Corbin Rand’s face was flushed, the blood mantling his cheeks under the thin perspiring skin. His hand moved towards the bed and the glass in his hand sloped.

“Sit ye down, boy. Ben Addison here is helping me spend my last days in a little celebration.” Corbin Rand drank and smiled brightly at his son.

Rand sat down beside his father, refused a drink and lit up with a single drag a much-needed stiffy. There was something—a tense sense, a sense of oppression—in the small room that made him feel uneasy. His father rarely drank, and never to excess.

“I made all the arrangements,” he said abruptly. “Everything nice and quiet.”

“Good. As it should be.” Corbin Rand did not appear to have understood fully what Rand had said. His eyes shone. Ben Addison knotted and finished his drink.

“Darn bunch of bastards,” he said fiercely, starting Rand.

“Who isn’t?” queried Rand.

“Why,” Addison guffawed widdily. “They are. All those mean lot of so-and-sos who kill us off when we get a little unruly on our pints.” He poured more liquor. “Good stuff, this,” he went on confidentially.
“They can’t replace me yet. Brew the beer, I do, and machines haven’t been invented yet that can judge what the malt and the hops’ll do by the time the beer runs from the barrels. Have ‘em right. When I’m died let me see how they get on with their damn machines then.”

Rand remained silent.

“Doo a symbol, that’s what I am.” Addams wiped his hand across his mouth. “A meddling left-over from a chauvin age—at least, that’s what the boss said the other day. And now they’re taking my old pal Carbon away. It’s not right.” He stood up suddenly, spilling the glass to the floor. “It’s all wrong! You shouldn’t have to kill off the old people.”

Corbon Rand stood in agreement, and Rand saw now that his father was quite sober. Some emotion had taken the life from him, made him listless and dull of expression, turned him into a man Rand did not recognize as the father he knew.

Corbon said: “It’s no use talking like that, Ben. If I’m to die, then I’ll die. Our way of looking at things is outdated and wrong, they’ve proved we’re wrong.” He looked up quickly at Rand. “We are wrong, aren’t we, son?”

Rand moistened his lips. He was swearing.

“Yes, father,” he said bocantly. “You’re wrong.”

The old man crumpled back on the bed. “Yes, Ben. Even my own son thinks like State does.”

Addams opened his mouth to reply. A sharp rap on the door cut him off and then Rand’s sister Ava and a slapper, slickly-groomed young man came into the small room.

There was much hubbub and then they sorted themselves out with Ava in the chair, the two old men and Rand on the bed and the glamour boy standing awkwardly beside Ava. She introduced him as Noel Chumlin from Hydropolis and then obviously forgot him in a flurry of cross-talk that left Rand with the impression that something bad upset Ava to such an extent that she was near hysterics.

“Why didn’t you tell me before, father?” she said reproachfully. “And you could have contacted me, Aron. After all, I’m only a year younger than you, and quite capable of looking after myself.”

The Rand menfolk apologized. Rand understood himself well enough to know that the worry beaped on him the last day or two was more than cause for forgetting.

“You never did get to State Polytechnic, Ava,” Corbon Rand said slowly. “And you’ve inclined to view things in a different light from most of the modern generation. Don’t make it harder for one.”
SUNSET

Rand realized with a profound shock that Ava had been talking and displaying emotions that he had never known she possessed. He glanced at her, at the mobile lips and soul-bright eyes and realized that this was a side new to him. His current boy friend appeared distressed at the turn of conversation.

Ava was saying: "But it's not right for you to go yet, father. There's your music, your concerts, Staton can't afford to lose that."

"If I can't work in the accepted sense of work," Carlton said quietly. "You must produce to earn your right to live."

"That's true, sir." Staton was speaking now, quite obviously, Rand saw with some amusement, trying to hold onto some shreds of reality in what must appear to him to be a bit of solemn.

"Mute doesn't fill scenarios," Rand said briskly.

"Ahem!" Ava raised to look at him, her face white with strain.

"That was unforgettable."

"All right," Rand said easily, drawing on his cigarette. "Just wanted to find out how you stood. You want to keep father alive because of his money—that's your reasoning logic to explain your instincts. You're trying to find some special reason why our father should be excepted from the laws you're quite happy to see other fathers obeying. Whatever the reason, you'd see other people stare if it meant that father stayed alive."

"I know I'm wrong," Ava said, her eyes fastened on Rand with an almost hypnotic intensity. "But, yes, I would. And I'm a fool for expecting you to see it. You're too much an automaton of Staton—"

"All right, Ava," Rand said, quite quietly, and yet his even tone silenced his sister immediately. Rand felt warm in the tiny room; it had never been built to hold five people, and he pulled himself off the bed and stepped up the ventilator input. As he turned back, the dapper Staton, smoothing his thick mustache with one white hand, broke into the conversation.

"You told me you had to see your father, Ava, and I nagged along. I didn't expect to listen to this sort of family nonsense, this spineless humanism, this coldly calculated appeal of your chances of breaking the law."

"That's quite a mouthful, son," old Ben Addams hissed under his breath excellently from the bed. He sat up and pointed at Carlton. "You tell me how you'll feel when they ask you to make your funeral arrangements."

"I hadn't thought about it."

"Censize you hadn't." Addams flashed in triumph. "Your mother's
been washed by State. Well, see, just think about it now.”

“This is getting nowhere, fast,” Casmir said coldly. “I think we should get along, Ava.”

Addams hopped off the bed. “Hold it, youngster. You don’t want to think about it, you’re frightened to, I know that. State ——”

“State knows quite well what it is about,” Casmir interrupted, breathing heavily. “Out of consideration for Ava I’ll say nothing of what I’ve heard here to-night. You’re the sort of people who would relish seeing the streets filled with cripples, and people in pain lying waiting for death in hospital beds.”

Addams used a word for which he immediately apologised to Ava.

“That’s your side of the story,” he said, his slight frame taut against the thin vigour of Casmir.

“I pay taxes, heavy taxes,” Casmir said viciously. “If you had your selfish way you’d live on an old age pension and bland me while supporting you. Look what happened at the end of the twentieth century! Millions of old people hiding like mice on the backs of their children, sitting around moaning about their small pensions and the cost of living, when the youngsters were sweating out their gruel earning the money to keep the old in comfort doing nothing. No wonder State took over and organised things on a fair basis. No work, no food! As simple as that.”

“If it takes the young to support the old then,” Rand broke in harshly, “why does State enforce birth control?”

“Otherwise the ignorant and low intelligence masses would breed like rabbits, and the intellectuals would gradually decline. For a husband and wife to keep up a reasonable standard of living and to support a decent upbringing family of brains at the same time is impossible. One child, at the most two, and their economic resources are fully occupied giving that child a good education and clothing and feeding it decently. The ignorant don’t care—or didn’t until State stepped in and organised the way the new generations grow up.”

The devil of it was, Rand knew, that was true. And poor, silly Vicki had got herself entangled with the juggernaut of State control, and was up against the mass opinion of millions of Noel Costains. His attention was taken by old Ben Addams who flapped back on the bed and began to drink from the bottle. Rand watched him. The dimwit had no answer to that. His emotions showed his judgement, true, but the old man had no emotional weapons to counteract accusations of mass breeding of morons. Birth control was an essential part of State doctrine, the planned beginning of a cycle that would end with the mass acceptance of the order to prepare your own funeral.
"Logically, all that is true." Rand's words were森 from him like juice from a crushed lemon, and as bitter. "But when it's someone you—someone you love—the picture takes on a different aspect."

"Come on, Ava," Conch said roughly, moving over to the door. "Let's get out of here before things are said that we'll be sorry for."

Ava remained sitting. "You go along, Ned," she said. "I want to say goodbye to my father."

"But, Ava..."

"I don't think I would be good company, not just now. I know your attitude is right, according to State. So just leave me alone." She stood up and went over to Corben Rand, put an arm around his shoulders. "Just leave me alone."

Ned Conch began to open the door, but stopped as Ben Addison shouted from the bed.

"You think State knows all the answers, don't you? Well, you're all wrong, do you hear, all wrong!" He was breathing loudly and his white hair was a wind-blown snowcap. "They ought to prevent this mess-breeding of morons you talk about by teaching people not to be morons. They didn't ought to interfere with people having children. It's not natural. Folk'd learn in time."

Conch laughed.

"It's time. Before the deluded fools learned they'd all be dead from hunger, like the rabbits who multiplied and ate their island bare. It's natural, you say. It's natural to have large families and it's natural to souse food and lay waste to fertile ground. What you need is a stiff dose of State science and ecology-ugenetics, then perhaps you'd face reality as it is, and not lie about you think it ought to be."

He looked round the room, at the four taut faces. "All right, don't worry. I won't speak on you. But I would advise you to forget any stupid ideas you might have of bucking the law."

"Well, thanks, son," old Ben said, and belched. Conch smiled contemptuously, and stalked out.

Ava burst into tears and thrust herself into her father's arms. Rand looked at Ben's bottle, took it and swallowed a great draught that burnt his throat. He began to wish that he had been one of those who hadn't been born.

Rand was asleep when Netta came home and she was still in bed when he left for the yards. He had to make a conscious effort to remember to head straight for his new office—Netta's old one—instead of donning his overalls before his machines. He felt lousy, and the sleeping
pills he had taken the night before still made him see double images. At least—he was blaming it on the pills. His head felt as though they were feeding it through a cystoscope.

Data on P-1 was centered prominently on the page in the desk and he was glad to get out again into fresh air on an inspection tour.

P-1 sat alone on her desk in the sun, pupils reflecting the sunshine into his eyes and filling them with wonder. He looked more carefully at the new ship than he had ever done before, noticing just what was necessary to tie up the equipment for which his section was responsible, and wondering if Vicki would show up this morning. By the time the mid-day break came round he knew a great deal more about the ship than he had; but Vicki had not appeared.

He rode the passenger elevator down to the cantine and ordered his food, finding a table out of the general hubbub and noise. Even then, but for the two strange girls who sat at the table for a confidential chat, he might have missed it. The thought of that made sweat run down his face. He turned sharply as the girls perched on, and a knot of ice formed in his stomach and spread until his heart was locked in its grip and stupid little thoughts ran as aimlessly as snow showers round the pole.

"...seven her right. Who does she think she is, anyway?"

"But, my dear, fancy trying to hide it! After all, the doctors aren't idiots. And coming to work as bold as brass! Really, I don't think she could have had a concussion."

"Well, they don't get away with it."

"More food for her for being a criminal. Her husband had a good job, hadn't he? Silly little fool, although mind you, I've no sympathy with those sort. The police ought to be more strict with offenders, then perhaps we'd get more to eat."

"I can't imagine how she must have felt—having the police come in right in the middle of check-up."

"Seven her right."

Rand moved swiftly along the bench and at the slight noise the two chattering girls looked at him, their faces went red and they giggled. Rand's face was set, feeling as though a clouding of ice held it immovable. That ice cracked and shards split into words.

"Who—who is this, please?" he asked.

"Hasn't you heard? Some brassy in electronics. Having a baby without a licence. A shocking thing."

"Shocking," agreed Rand, feeling numb. "But who?"

"Mrs Steinway—" The girl's eyes narrowed. "Is anything the matter?"

"Vicki, Vicki Vicki. You poor, sweet, helpless fool. So you couldn’t avoid a check-up, after all. And it’s all come out and I shan’t see you again." The words stabbed themselves in his head. He went out of the elevator, up in the elevators and shot the door of his office quietly.

After a time he rounded himself and drank some water.

Then he thought about his father. Going from his office, he walked along to Shutter’s office, knocked and went in. Shutter was smoking, his face pale under his glasses.

"Oh, Rand. Just the man I wanted to see. Here, P-One is perfect, on paper. But there’s a little snag—what’s the matter, man? You look ghastly."

"Can I have the afternoon off, sir?"

"What? Hell, no! There’s too much work to do on post-fighting P-One. That ship has got to be finished by to-morrow, Rand!" Rand saw that Shutter’s eyes, cold pale in the flared flash, were sharp and shrewd and full of suspicion. "Are you ill?"

"No—that is—"

"What’s the trouble, Rand? Why not tell me. Perhaps I can help you."

"I don’t think so, sir. It’s very good of you; but it’s just a personal matter—"

Shutter picked up his yellow pencil and jabbed it in sharp angles at his desk. He did not look at Rand.

"Heer your father’s preparing his funeral, Rand."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I’m sorry to hear it, but that’s how it is. Something that comes to us all in Shutter’s good time."

Rand had difficulty in concealing himself that he was here, feet planted firmly in the Works Manager’s pile rug, talking about the central facts of life with an almost casual air though they were not affecting every moment of his day and night; almost as though it seemed to him, he was talking about some stranger. He caught again that distant impression that Shutter was weighing every word he spoke, picking the right meaning he wanted to convey, and that Rand’s mind was obdurate refusing to open and reach the hidden information. Whatever was the matter with Shutter, Rand had too many troubles of his own to waste time investigating. He lifted his lips and flung himself into changing the subject.

"You wanted to talk to me about P-One, sir?"
Nebula

Slattery looked disappointed. He threw the pencil down, rose, and walked over to the window. “Yes, Rand. Only a minor snag, nothing to worry us unduly, but it may mean your working overtime. We must have that ship finished.”

“Very good, sir. If I can have this evening free—”

“Of course. Tomorrow is our last day, you may have to work on into the night. Just make sure that your section completes their part.” Slattery swung round from the window. “Oh, and Rand. If you run into trouble, any trouble at all, come and see me. I’ll help you out.”

“I’ll do that, sir.”

“Right. Now get to hell outta here and clear that lazy bunch of workmen out of producing results.”

Rand got. He had decided at once to give up the first crazy idea he’d had of rushing out there and then in blind panic to the dictates of Slattery. And, anyway, evening was the best time for what he must do. Nothing, now, could be done about poor Vicki. He had failed her, completely and miserably. But the same remoteness and impersonal machine which had raised her was not to have the same success with his father. Waiting for six o’clock, Rand performed his work like a robot—thinking, planning and working himself up into a simmering mass of anger.

He could see, quite plainly, against the blank office wall, a hundred flashing recollections of his father. Of the old man bringing home Rand’s first fishing rod and how they sat in timeless warming talk by the river. They never did get a bite that day. Rand remembered. Of the violin and the concerts that would make them famous. Of Mortiusa and Terrance, scuffling down the stairs in the old house, water-painted auburn until mother came out with a nap and chased them both, helpless with laughter, into the garden. The old man had been fine. Rand repented the blank years after he was married and mother died and his father had played his violin in Widow’s Row. He had the sort of regret that was hollowly unfeeling, that could bring back nothing, that could change nothing; except, perhaps, his final actions for the future. Always, look forward, the past is there, unchangeable, a fixture of the mind that only death or psychosomatic annihilation can eradicate.

Rand wasn’t dead—and he had no wish to forget. He began thinking of all the people he knew at all well, sorting them into two categories: those he had no hope whatever would help and those who, because of some trifling remark, some infernally atarctic attitude, might offer to aid him. The normals moved rapidly on his mental discard pile whilst the helpers remained discouragingly small. The trouble was,
he acknowledged ruefully at last, he didn’t know any criminals.

Sharp on six o’clock he closed the office door behind him without bothering to ring Nettie and hail a streetcar. If anyone could help of the people he knew, Dirk Shulan was the man. Strange how now, with those new thoughts in his head, Rand could see his acquaintance and friends in an altogether fresh light, from a radically opposite viewpoint to the polite, vacuous and superficial outlook of his whole previous life. He was still wondering about that when he vacated his identity into Shulan’s place.

Shaken, eager and smiling, welcomed him, a little perplexed, Rand passed, by this unexpected exit. Shulan had been a friend in the past, neglected of late, and Rand had a slight feeling of non-contact as he told him briefly of his father’s approaching funeral. He finished by saying, simply: “I want to get Dad away to Mars, or Venus. I know they need men there. Shulan keeps the colonies deliberately under-populated I hear for fear of succession. You’d know more about that.”

Shulan’s big face sagged and lines of worry creased round his eye.

“I’m sorry to hear about your father, Anton. And the colonies do need men, badly. Shula keeps a very tight hold on them, I can tell you, it’s an open secret.” He pulled out a packet of silent and spilt them on the floor as his fingers jerked. “But you’re asking the impossible, Anton. I’ll overlook your declared intention of committing a criminal act—State knows I’ve no love of the present set-up—but you’ll never get away with it.”

“All I want to do is to smuggle us aboard a ship for Mars or Venus. You can do that, Dirk, I know.”

“You’d go as well?”

Rand shrugged, “I could come back.” He knew that was a gesture.

“What else can I do?”

“I don’t know. I can’t afford to get mixed up in anything like this, Anton. Scared you realize that?” Shulan pursed and eyed Rand. Then he said abruptly: “I can only suggest you see Whiteman Stokes. But your father has no right to hold onto life after he has finished with it. You’re doing no-one any good—”

Rand walked out, stony-faced, the beginnings of despair growing in him.

He glanced at his watch and decided to take a stroll to Widower’s Row. He walked along the dimly corridor past his father’s door and knocked on the door with the card reading: “Res Addams.” There was a delay and then the door opened an inch and Addams’ bright eyes stared suspisciously at Rand, saw who was calling, and the
door was opened all the way.

"Gotta be careful, son. The snoops are always around and I brought back—anyway, don't stand there. Come in." Rand went inside and Addams shut the door and slid the bolt.

"Forgive me if I'm intruding," he said. "But I must talk to you about my father."

Addams flapped on his customary bed. Rand noticed that the white coocher of hair lay limp on the old man's head; but the eyes were as needle-sharp and shrewd as ever. Addams brought out the inevitable bottle, which Rand waved away.

"Well, what do you want to talk about?" Addams shrugged and drank politely.

"I know how you feel about my father," Rand began cautiously.

"I feel instructed to you for calling him up —."

"Come to the point, son," Addams said, not kindly.

Rand swallowed. "Well—I want to get him away to Mars, or Venus. I thought you could help."

"Why not?"

Rand smiled thinly. He didn't miss the fact that old Ben Addams made no disclaimer, made no attempt to avoid offering help. There was something about this calm acceptance of unlawfulness that both strengthened and perplexed Rand. The ways of the underworld were completely strange to him; he would just have to learn them in a hurly.

"You work at the brewery. But you are also in a position to obtain bootlegged drink and I feel sure that means you have contacts with—well, let's say his inhabited planes than I."

Addams chuckled. "Let's say that, sure, son." His face grew grave. "But that's an altogether bigger one. Getting old Corben aboard a ship to the planets. One hell of a big order. I don't rightly know that I could help."

Rand felt the familiar sensations of despair that he had experienced when Dick Shalul had turned him down. These little people acted big. But when it came to the pitch of disobeying Stats, of breaking the laws against which they railed, why, then it was a different story. The ball of ice that had encased his mind and emotions ever since he had heard about Vick, was being melted piece by piece, gradually being frozen out by the lukewarm loyalties of people he had perhaps hoped too much from. This opposition only strengthened his resolve to save his father; it had taken a long while to build up, painfully surging, and distorting his sense of values so that now he was set on breaking the law. Once he had taken that decision and bound all that it involved he was not going
to discard his new-found resolution and abandon his stand. He glared at Adams.

"So you can't help, either! After all you said last night, and your argument with that poppy Custain, I had hoped you might be able to help."

"Whoa, son.\" Adams looked injured. "I didn't say I wouldn't help you, just that it was mighty difficult. I, personally, cannot help you at all.\" He chuckled, and the chuckle turned into a wheezing cough. He wiped his mouth. "But I can put you onto someone who can help you."

Rand felt a tremendous weight rise from his depression and his spirits soared. He gripped Adams' arm. "Who? Where is he? What—?"

"Hold it!\" Adams barked the words. His eyes narrowed. "Now just take it easy. We'll work this out between us all right. But you've gotta keep your head. State knows the situation's bad enough, without hysterical blowups to complicate matters."

"I'm sorry."

"Right. Now, I know a man who is what you would call a crook. He takes a fair amount of bootleg liquor, and dabbles in other things on the side. I'm not in such a big way of business that he owes me much; but he'd do me a favor if he could. You go see him, tell him I sent you and what you want.\" Adams picked up the bottle again. "If he can't help you, nobody can."

"Where do I find him?"

"He runs the 'Memory Annex.' State has it listed as a night-club. I'll leave you to fill in other things that happen. Oh, and take it easy when you get there. Don't go shooting your wad off to everybody. The underworld are touchy. Ask for Whitman Stinson."

"Whitman Stinson? But I was already told to see a man called that. It didn't mean a thing to me."

Adams grinned. "Whoever told you was trying to help, evidently he was too afraid to open up."

Rand dismissed that. He stood up and smiled at Adams, feeling better than he had for two days.

"Thanks a lot, Ben. I won't forget."

"After you've introduced yourself to Stinson, just forget you know me. I want to live to a ripe old age, if State will let me."

"They can't do without you, Ben. But just wouldn't be the same."

"You're right, at that.\" Adams grunted and went back to his berth.

There was no answer to Rand's knock on his father's door. He stood in the chilly corridor, waiting, planning his next move. First, to
tell the old man, reassure him that, Stan or no, he needn’t walk through the purple archway. Second, see Whitman Stilken, tonight at the latter, and arrange a passage. Things were shaping up. Rand knocked again, then pushed the door open. He went inside.

His father was lying head first from the bed, one limp hand trailing the violets onto the floor, blue-faced, writhing in whining, choking gasps that sounded like an animal in a trap. Rand rushed across the room, pulled his father back on the bed and curved deep in his throat.

A heart attack. This upset his plans completely and as he stood looking down at his father bitterness welled up in him. It looked as though State was going to have it all its own way.

The two policemen looked challengingly at Rand who preferred to return their gaze rather than betray his intense interest in Slattery’s office clock. This questioning had started at half-past four, it must be at least five by now. Another hour and then he could escape from the octopus-like grip of the youth and carry through his plan. His plan! It seemed very pathetic and flimsy before the lawful might of these policemen.

“May I ask you, Mister Rand, why you did not attend your father’s funeral?”

“We’re very busy here,” Rand replied brusquely. “Mister Slattery can verify that. We have a job that must be finished by tonight. I just couldn’t spare the time.”

Slattery wagged his yellow pencil. “That’s right, officer. We’re producing a family melodrama that will revolutionise space travel.”

“Yes, yes.” The policeman brushed that aside trivially. “I’ve heard about it. I’d like to own one myself, if police pay me to that kind of luxury. Now, Mister Rand, you were seen going into your father’s block on Wildflower’s Row last night. Since that time your father has not been seen. I’d ask you again, for the last time, do you know where he is?”

“I can only report, I don’t know,” Rand lied. He found deception surprisingly easy when it was a simple piece of a larger design. Old Ben Addams, summoned by the frantic Rand had come into Corbin’s room, taken over. Ava had been summoned. They’d smuggled the old man out, inaccessible, and hidden him in Ava’s room. How long before the police found him then Rand didn’t like to guess. He only hoped that he’ll be safe until this evening.

Rand had been forced to go into work today—if he’d stayed out the police would have realized at once that they had something more serious on their hands than one old man trying to avoid his death. Rand remained self-assured and, to his own amazement, detached from all this,
as though he were viewing it on a tape. He'd committed himself, now he meant to carry out his plans without any further second thoughts or

The policeman left. Slattery looked quizzically at Rand.
“Will you be working on tonight, Rand?”
“Yes, sir.”
“I thought you might have—other ideas.”
“I don't understand, sir. F.O. One has to be finished —”
“All right, Rand. I'm not going to repeat what I said before about
coming to see if you need help. Just remember it, that's all.”
“I will, Mister Slattery.”

Rand left Slattery's office and dismissed the man from his mind.
As soon as the six o'clock hour blew he'd go out with the mass of
workers and he wouldn't be coming back. F.O. One was ready, in any case,
a shining spikelike standing in the blast area alongside the river waiting
for the buyers to examine it in the morning. All he was needed for
was a final routine check and the ship was already one hundred percent.
Characteristically, Rand was pleased. Even in his present predilection
he had no wish to let down the old firm.
Sharp on six o'clock he left his office with the lights still burning
and went briskly out of the yard, mingling with the thousands of work-
er-somers homeward bound. He went straight to Ava's place. He remembered
to watch out for anyone following him, rather self-consciously scanning
the shadows around her block and feeling foolish when he saw no one
remotely resembling a policeman. Ava greeted him in a subdued mood;
her young face worried.

“How is she?”
“Oh, father's all right now, Anton. But it was a nasty turn and I'm
worried.”
“Well, let's not waste time.” Rand grasped his lap. “The police
were questioning me today, so I don't want to attract their attention by
too much coming around, especially as I'm supposed to be working this
evening. Father had better come with me now.”
“All right, Anton. If you say so.”

The radio was diffusing sweet music which faded as they entered the
living room. Corvax was sitting, white-faced and drooping, in a chair,
his hands loosely hanging between his knees. He smiled at Rand. The
radio bonged and an announcer said with pseudo excitement:
“The latest sugar ratio is to hand, belles and gentlemen. State is
happy to announce that the new figure is two point two five seven, an
advance of point oh one six on last month's figures. This is indeed a
great achievement and all praise is given to State for its wise government.

Cotton need an inch more rain to grow well. Without rain, Cotton will not grow well.

"Every human being on this planet needs two point five acres of land to feed and clothe him," he said. "With all our hydroponics and undersea farms State can't raise that figure. It's a mad-son, and starvation looks like winning."

"That's better than the middle of the twentieth century," Rand said optimistically. "They were living on a point eight acres per head then."

The announcer went on: "Now hear a police message. Will anyone who has information on the whereabouts of Cotton Rand please inform the police at once. Vital statistics as follows: 'Height —'

Ava slammed the radio off and turned to stare sickly at Rand.

"What are we to do, Auntie? We've got everyone —"

"Now take it easy," Rand snapped. "Father and I are leaving at once. If the police question you — and they will, you can be sure — you just don't know anything. Did you go along to the funeral today?"

"Yes, I went." Ava whispered. "It was horrible. We just walked around and then people began to talk and say things —" She lifted her head defiantly. "But I don't care. It wasn't their father they'd come to say goodbye to."

"As soon as we reach Mars, or wherever we make planetfall," Rand said quickly, "we'll send a cable. Just a simple, matter-of-fact thing: but you'll know that we made it safely."

"I'll be waiting, Auntie."

They went out the back way. Rand pressed from the doorway, made sure that everything was quiet, and this time there was no self-consciousness about it. He knew now how a hunted criminal felt. That terrible sense of tightness, that there is nowhere to turn, that every man's hand is against you. His lips were bloodless, pressed together, and his face felt thin and snarled as though the skin had been pulled. He held on to his father's arm and they went straight away from the blind, thick concretes buildings where Ava lived, without deviating, walking quickly and yet unheuristically, as though they had had just enough time to reach an appointment. The air felt cold on Rand's face.

"You don't have to do this, you know, son."

"But I do, Dad. State knows, I do."

"I was resigned to my end —"

"Weren't you? I don't think you were. I've been thinking about that over these past couple of days and I know that I couldn't face my own
end is just the same way that I would have done before. But you, you're one of the old left-overs, a pre-State incubusious person and for you the idea of death —

Corbin Rand smiled slightly, his haggard cheeks wrinkling.  

"Now you've gone off half-cooked, son. If it isn't all white for you it must be all black. Sure, none of the left-overs.functions death. But there can come a time when it appears quite normal, even something you desire."

"Like a man at the end of torture?"

"Something like that. I'm at the end of something, too, Anton. Not as dramatic as torture; but certainly no less disgusting."

"Look at Ava, at her reaction —"

"Ava's reactions are simple, Anton. There's no deeply hidden motives there. She hasn't been as fully State indoctrinated as some, and her desire not to see me die easily overcame what little training she had. Bless her, poor girl. She needs sympathy, you know, Anton. For the future I know."

They rounded a corner and headed for the bright-lights end of town, walking rather than risk a grous. Corbin Rand appeared such in thought. He said, suddenly, as though it had to come out: "I'm to blame for Ava. If I hadn't insisted that she stayed at home instead of going on to extra-curriculum studies at the Poly with Nettie she'd be far happier now." Corbin drew a quick breath. "But, your mother needed help, Anton, you know that. I'm surprised Nettie allowed it."

"Take your time, Dad." Rand said, worried by his father's quick breathing for breath. Then, carrying on as though the interlude had not occurred: "I think that one single girl couldn't affect a great deal, they even have some less in the early days that they are now. Just a matter of strengthening their grip. But, for all their totalitarian methods, they're still right. We're the wrong ones."

Rand stopped, looked back to his present problem as his father gasped and stumbled, clung weakly to Rand."

"Dad—yes all right?"

"Sure, son. Just a trifle. And my legs feel rubbery, as though I don't own them any more."

"Oh damnit." Rand glared around and shook a grous. "They'd have to change it, that was their only alternative. The grous open its wings, hastening them smoothly along the city centre, sweeping to the hundred-thirty miles an hour level over Central Square. Below them and on either side brilliant light transformed the heart of the city into a
SUNSET

pageant of noon-day. Thousands of people pushed and jostled along
the pavements and fly-overs were carried in speeding vehicles through
the airlanes, all hungrily seeking an evening's entertainment in this vast
honeycomb of artificial life. The two Rands sat, silent, staring ahead,
their faces, so much alike, set into hard planes and shadows of terse
expectancy.

The gynchos came down on the roof of the 'Merry Ann' and
Rond drilled the 'Wait and Cheep' command. Now they'd take a
gynchos they might as well retain it and prevent it drifting information
to police headquarters as soon as they were finished. Conran Rand's
face was an unhealthy putty colour. He shook his head at Rond.

"You can still back out, son. Don't worry about me any more,
Pll ---""Why don't you hear?" He nudged his father towards
the job. "We're committed to this thing now. Whatever Stokes just has to
help us."

"I wonder."

"He's got to!" They found Whatman Stokes in the gaming salon, watching
the four-boat. The low room was a swirling swirl of men and women
with flushed faces and glittering eyes, who shouted and raised encourage-
ment to the fighting fungi of their choice. Smoke curled acidly. The
Rands waited tensely at the bar until the victorious fungi had converted
the plastic globes into a tell of its own creation. Then Stokes pushed
through the mob and Rand nodded at him.

"Ben Addams sent us."

Stokes looked pointedly at the empty polished wood of the counter
and Rand ordered quickly. With his glass rolling between white hands,
Stokes eyed them with bright beady, suspicious eyes.

"What do you want? Forgery coupons?"

"No. A passage to Mars, or Venus."

"Is that all?"

"Stokes tipped his drink contemptuously. "My boys can fix most things, but what you're asking is murder, pure and simple.""

"That's what we're trying to avoid." Rond spoke sharply, conscious
of time running out. "Listen, Stokes, we have to get to one of the
planets. And we have to get out of the city tonight. Can you do it?"

"It'll cost you money."

"I can pay."

"You realize what you're asking? Forged papers, medical, egipien,
psycho, a flying place, either a murder or a kidnapping to create a
 vacancy. And with the police on your tail . . . Yes, it'll cost you money
Nebula

all right, Mister Rand.

"How did you—oh, the radio!" Rand cursed. "All right. How much?

"Ten thousand."

"Ten—thousand! But, man, that's impossible."

"That's my price. Take it or leave it. And, to be brutally frank, I'd rather you left it.

Stokes glanced over the room, a casual-sounding yet all-encompassing survey. He motioned and led the way towards a back room.

"Come out of the spotlight. Even though those moors in there are so guss they can't tell a killer Venusian Red-Spot from a tame Earth mole with a shot of coccinial and dope some fool might recognize you."

He closed the door. "Now, ten thousand or nothing. That's final."

"I've nothing like that," Rand protested. He felt sick. "How much for taking just my father, alone?"

"Still ten."

"It's no use, Aaron," Corten said simply.

"Can you pay or can't you?" Stokes finished his drink and the glass made an ominous final noise on the table. "If you can't, don't waste my time.

"I haven't anything like that money." Rand felt confused, alone, the noise of the gambling crowd outside somehow mixed up his head like the beating of some great internal sea. "Come on, father."

They left by another lift, walking over the roof in despondent silence. So this was what criminals experienced! This was the price of disobeying State. What could he do now? He felt drained of energy, this last reverse had taken away his will, and, it appeared starkly obvious that there was no one else from whom they could expect hope.

Stokes's final words rang mockingly in his head. "Care to win the money out there?" with a derisive gesture to the room where fangi battled in plastic globes. Rand had glimpsed from Stokes' casual remark that how much chance he had of winning money there. He stood at the gynport. If only he hadn't broken the law, he'd been certain to allow life to go on along its predetermined course; he would have been working as P-One, secure in the knowledge that he had gained promotion. Now, would have her baby, she'd move into bigger and better quarters. He'd possibly buy a hillside—P-One!

Of course. The answer was there, standing shining and waiting, in the Thiren yards. He grasped his father's arm, bunded him into the gynport and dialed for the yards.

"What now, Aaron?" His father was listless, interested. Rand
SUNSET

wanted to urge more speed from the cab, to get there, to blast away in P. One, spare this world under his heel.

"Our last chance, father. Our last hope." Netta would be wondering why he hadn’t snatched her by now. Netta. He felt a twinge of remorse for her, shallow, painted selfish. He knew well enough that she didn’t care who fathered her child so long as she had one. She bore him a grudge that he hadn’t a better job, hadn’t been in a position to live in more handsome style. But most of all, because he wasn’t high enough up in the State promotion ladder to father her child.

"I can simply walk into the yard, Dad. We’ll go straight to P. One—the new space manufactory—she’s all ready for the demonstration flights tomorrow. We’ll go to Mars on our own power—or Venus. Would you prefer Venus?" He was speaking as much for his own benefit as his father’s. It might not be as easy as all that, but he felt supremely confident that it could be done. Outside, the night wind passed with a sneaking of lights as the city fell away and the Thames yards with their miles of voths looped up. Yes, he could get in easily, explain his father by saying he was a new tech, and then they could decide which planet it was to be.

They could even try both, and take their pick.

The grounds dipped. The yards slid up, engulfed them, swung and swayed and then the cabs came to a screeching halt. There was a tight-faced feeling about Rand as he climbed out. He helped his father down and then, as if to show how efficient at this crook business he could be, he poked the “Wait and Charge” and smiled, a little shakily. The cab would wait a long while.

He got through the main gate without trouble. The high mesh needed behind them as they walked, trying to appear casual, down the long incline to the Thames jet area. P. One, a silver stoat caught and pinned by billons of candle-power, stood straight and tall before them, like a pointing finger.

"There she is, Dad."

His father tried to smile, but his face contorted instead into a grimace of pain. One thin hand pressed his side.

"Dad! Come on, now. We’re nearly there."

"I’m right with you, son. Just a pain..."

Rand put one arm around his father’s waist and half dragged him along. They couldn’t fall now, not with P. One standing there proud and waiting for them. They struggled towards the ship, having the concealing shadows, going out across the open where a few late workers moved slowly.
"I—I can't make it, m'm. Go—Go—"

Crombo Rand slumped limply in Rand's arms. He looked down at the fire, seeing for the first time the ravages of time in the sunken cheeks, sagging pouches of blue-green flesh under the eyes, the thin stubble on the scavengy chin and neck. His father was old. Too old to work, State said.

State was right.

All manner of thoughts crowded through Rand's head. Netta. And Ava, her tear-stained face pleading. Not fully comprehending what she was pleading for. Stately, not this, this pitiful husk of a man, limp and gasping in Rand's arms. And Vicki. Poor, stupid Vicki. She had by now found that State was right, that what State said State meant.

Crombo Rand slipped from his arms, lay sprawled and lax on the concrete. The monstrous breathing guttered, the face was ghastly, fright-

ening. Rand, standing numbly over his father watched him die. Heard the last struggle for breath, the last rattling exhalation.

He looked up, up to where P. One stood, aloof and shining, distin-

guished, sternly calm. A shadow came between him and the glistening spire.

Shakily said: "I told you to come to me for help, Rand. Now it's too late."

Behind Shiny, coming from the shadows, two policomen. They walked towards Rand, standing there by his father's body. He could have run for P. One, got aboard, taken off. He could have, easily.

He just stood there, waiting.

The policemen walked towards him. They were calm, unruffled, quite without emotion. They were just servants of State, doing their job, protecting citizens from criminals.

Astem Rand stood watching them come for him.

KENNETH BULMER
Universe Times Two

A scientific article in which a popular contributor to a large number of science magazines gives us a glimpse of the exploration of space which is going on day by day in the observatories of the world.

Man is gaining his knowledge of the universe like a young child growing up in a society filled with strange laws and concepts. He has to learn by a process of trial and error, recognizing patterns of data and building them into a scheme of understanding. Often when he has built a theory he has to check back to correct it but, by doing so, he opens the door to new knowledge.

Astronomers, during the last few years, have been correcting their laws of the universe; it is now twice as large as was previously thought although the size of our galaxy is not affected. Also, until recently, it was believed that only two types of stars, ranging from the tremendous supergiants down to tiny white dwarfs, were uniformly mixed in the galaxies. It has now been proved that galaxies contain two distinct star populations, which tend to be segregated. There is also new evidence that points to galaxies having a cluster-like structure in some galaxies, with other clusters being randomly distributed.

The change in the scale of size of the universe is the result of the discovery of errors in the measurement of the distance of objects far from our own galaxy. No single method is used to measure interstellar distances and a chain of connected methods allows astronomers to extend their measurements to the furthest parts of the universe. However, one link in the chain proved to be weak and gave rise to serious errors. These are now being dismissed and astronomers forced to rebuild. But the rebuilding has resulted in a stronger structure, for other discrepancies, such as the difference between astronomical and physical estimation of the age of the Earth, have also been found.

Knowing the distance of the Earth from the Sun enables the distances of the nearer stars to be found by a method similar to that used by a land surveyor using a theodolite, except that the distance of the Earth’s orbit round the Sun is used as a base line. Measurements must be very accurate and must be made for stars that are so far away, and so faint, that their light is scattered over a large area of the sky.

More distant stars have to be measured by indirect methods. If the apparent brightness of a star...
is large enough, its spectrum can be analyzed and its distance worked out by comparing the intensity of the lines in its spectrum with those of a nearer star whose distance has been measured by a direct method. Although this method is very accurate, it cannot be used for stars, distant stars are so dim that their spectra can barely be seen from them to obtain an accurate analysis of their spectrum.

Very much greater distances are measured using the properties of the variable stars known as Cepheid variables. They are very bright stars, some hundreds of times brighter than the sun, and are peculiar in that they wax and wane with clock-like regularity. Each one varies its brightness in a characteristic manner, the white dwarf type being the most regular. This is because they are not stable, and their internal pressures are not balanced by the weight of their surfaces. This causes pulsations and the whole of the star blows up like a balloon and then collapses, the longer its size the longer the cycle.

About 40 years ago, 25 Cepheid variables were discovered in the cluster of the two clouds of stars known as the Magellanic Clouds, our nearest neighbors outside this galaxy. When these Cepheids were discovered it was found that they were systematically arranged in the order of increasing apparent brightness. As they were all in the same cloud, which is immenely distant in comparison with the distance between the stars in it, all these Cepheids could be considered as being the same distance away from us. This was a宇宙 mystery to the astronomers, until, by means of high sensitive photography plates, to test special photographic emul-
since very sensitive to red and blue light. Using the 100 inch telescope with the blue-sensitive plate he could only obtain blurs when he photographed the nucleus of the Andromeda galaxy. But, with the red-sensitive plate, he was able, for the first time, to pick out separate stars in the nucleus. He was surprised to find that these are all cool, red stars and that all the very hot, blue stars are concentrated towards the edge of the galaxy, particularly in the spiral arms. He recognized that there were two different types of stellar population and he called them Population I and II, the most important astronomical discovery of this century.

Population I is made up of very bright and massive stars. These stars, 100,000 times brighter than our sun, are found together with supergiants, open star clusters and Cepheid variables. Population I stars, together with a few Population II stars, are always found in the spiral arms of our own and similar galaxies but never near the nucleus. They are always associated with vast clouds of gas and dust. All the bright stars in any galaxy from which stars are still being formed. They are all young stars, not more than 1,000 million years old and have been formed from interstellar dust rather than from interstellar gas. Now, young stars are replacing the older, dying ones and a steady state of birth and death, one balancing the other, has been reached.

The center of spiral galaxies and spherical systems, such as globular clusters, contain only Population II stars. There is none of the immensely bright stars, the brightest are cool red stars only 1,000 times as bright as our sun. Population II stars are faster moving and older than Population I stars and were made from interstellar gas before it had a chance to condense into dust clouds. There are no remaining gas clouds and there is no reproduction of stars in Population II. Our sun is a Population II type star.

It is in the nucleus of a Population I part of this galaxy. Population II contains bright red giants, supergiants and cluster type variable stars.

The latter have short periods of pulsation, only 10 to 15 hours. They have high velocities and are white or red in colour. Like the Cepheid variables, their brightness is also related to their periods.

Inside accordingly expected that the centre of the Andromeda galaxy should contain cluster type variables and the discovery of Population I stars shows that these should just be bright enough to show up on photographs taken with the 200 inch telescope on Mount Palomar. But, when Baade looked for them, he couldn't find a single one in his plates. As it was unlikely that the Andromeda galaxy had a unique structure, the only explanation was that it was at least 10,000 times older than the oldest cluster type variable in the Milky Way and that the stars then first appeared to be dimmer. He thought that the error had most probably occurred in the calibration of the Cepheid variable period-brightness ratio.

This was confirmed by photographs of the near, short-period, cluster type variables in the M81 and M82 galaxies. It was found that the previous figures for their distance were about half the new ones. The distance of Andromeda was about 1.6 million parsecs from a new study of many Cepheid variables, all within 1,500
light years and relatively unobscured by dust clouds. From this and its comparison of the bright- ness of the Andromeda galaxy with that of the Magellanic Clouds it was decided that all old extra-galactic distances had to be doubled.

The Magellanic Clouds are now believed to be 160,000 light years away, instead of 80,000. The error was due to the fact that Cepheid variables are found where there is a great deal of dust that cuts down their apparent brightness. This interstellar dust is irregularly distributed and it is difficult to correct for the effects of this.

The mass of the dust in such a galaxy is likely to be greater than the combined masses of all the stars.

This change in the distance scale of the universe means that the 300 inch telescope on Mount Palomar has a range of 2,000 million light years instead of 1,000 million. Objects at this extreme range are seen as they were 2,000 million years ago, the time the light has taken to reach us.

The size of our galaxy is not affected; all the distance measurements given in the previous chapter are correct, but using methods which do not depend on the brightness of Cepheid variables. But the size as well as the distance of all other galaxies must be doubled and our galaxy is no longer unique as being the largest. This uniqueness had always puzzled astronomers, who doubted that our galaxy should be so much different from the other 193 spiral systems known. Even the Andromeda galaxy is now certainly much larger than ours.

By calculating back to the time when all galaxies were close together, the age of the universe was fixed at 20,000 million years. But evidence based on the rate of star formation indicates that the earth is only 3,500 million years old. The Earth cannot be older than the universe so it was apparent that somewhere there was an error or falsity. The new figures for the size of the universe make its age 4,000 million years, very much better agreement than was previously attained.

It is only a hundred years since astronomers' assumptions were changed again and the change falls rather neatly into another hundred years. Astronomers themselves will not be confused by the Solar system. If the dreams of interstellar travel is ever realized we now know that we are more likely to find older stars, probably with planets capable of supporting civilizations, towards the centre of the galaxy, but our long term policy of finding the nearest stars are dying, tend to move from the centre of the galaxy towards the newer Population I types, in the ages, that have captured down and reached maturity.

Perhaps that is why our sun, a yellow stranger amidst the dark, bright blue stars hemming it in at the rim of the galaxy, has yet to be, visited by alien surveying ships; the average age and development of stars in this section of our galaxy is too small to interest others.

JOHN NEWMAN
The Facts About Hypnotism

In this article, specially written for "Nebula", Mr. Powers explains some of the mysteries of that fascinating yet little known subject, Hypnotism.

Our first article about hypnotism appeared not so long before the advent of the scientific press that hypnotism is now available to the public under the auspices of the National Health Service.

No one can accuse Nebula of being behind the times! Now that the British Medical Association has taken a more enlightened view, and that the subject has been officially recognized, do we finally arrive at the dignified status of an established Science, more people than ever before are asking: "What exactly is hypnotism, and how can it help?"

Much printer's ink was splattered by the newspapers in consequence of the Medical Board's decision, but even Medical opinion was divided. The members fell back on themselves to a theory. Apparently they knew that if they did nothing, each-and-every man in the crowd, but they were unable, or do not care, to say why, and the public awaits an explanation.

When the human mind is the field of exploration, the most brilliant of researchers can only decently and heroically—without being able to analyze facts. Practically the whole of the modern school of psychiatry is founded largely upon the theories of Freud, yet those theories have never actually been proven. In the case of hypnotism, the very nature of the subject led many eminent investigators into erroneous conclusions, and they were responsible for the breach between the two Continental schools of Salpetriere and Nancy.

It would seem, therefore, that the writer's own theories, founded on years of experience and research, should be at least as worthy of hearing as anyone's else; so I have present them, and the reader may judge of their logicality and worth.

The first thing is to realize that a hypnotic factor is involved, and an domination of will, how is it that one person can cause another to enter a sleep-like state, merely by suggesting that he should do so?

The answer is "Applied Psychology". We all know that certain conditions are conducive to sleep; a
warm fire, a cozy chair in a quiet room; nothing—such as a book, or television, or an important task, claiming our attention—and sleep comes easily. Or, picture a warm summer's afternoon; soft sound or music; waves rhythmically breaking the shore, or a breeze whispering among the trees, or the night sounds—tapping, moving, more and more, until finally we doze.

The hypnotist induces this pre-dilection for sleep, or an atmosphere favoring it, by his own methods. He tells his subject—calms, peace, relaxation; and certain physical symptoms which predispose sleep.

Thus: "Your eyelids are growing heavy—it is an effort to keep them open—you blink—let them close. You relax more, you let yourself sink deeper into your chair. Let your body get more and more capable and willing subject. It is entirely logical that these suggestions should have the desired effect: that the subject should, in fact, fall asleep. Why not?

Perhaps one of the most remarkable aspects of hypnosis is that so many scientific and logical investigators, such as those of the medical profession, could not perceive this simple and logical fact long ago!"

But you must agree that nothing at all extraordinary is demanded of you, you think. "Ah! The extraordinary part comes after the subject is asleep!"

Well, what happens? Example: The subject talks in his sleep?

So do any amount of people. The subject laughs, cries, sleeps, recites, in his sleep?

So do any amount of people. The subject snorts, yells, in his sleep?

So do any amount of people.

So do somnambulists. The subject's eyes open, yet he still sleeps. The eyes of many somnambulists are open.

The hypnotic subject sees things which aren't there, believes in situations which aren't real.

So does any dreamer. But the subject of hypnosis doesn't dream these things because the HYPNOTIST suggests them!

The dreamer does these things because his SUBCONSCIOUS suggests them.

Physically, then, the difference between hypnosis and what we term "Ordinary sleep," is as follows:

An ordinary sleep, the workings of the subconscious mind causes dreams, and in some cases—somnambulism—the sleeper may enact those dreams.

The hypnotic sleep allows his subconscious mind to be in sleep, since a trance-state has been achieved—you might say a tranced, or an altered, or hypnotized state. The hypnotist allows his own ego to remain in the background, submerged, and accepts the suggestions of the hypnotist for his dreams, instead of their being the result of the workings of his own subconscious mind. He thus enacts these dreams. He is, in fact, a somnambulist directed by the hypnotist—within limits.

Since the hypnotist is directing the subject's dreaming, directly in opposition to his own strong religious, ethical, or moral beliefs, some hypnotists have tried to dispense with this by "tricking" their subjects into doing "natural" actions, such as "mending" with a cardboard dagger.

They have proved nothing. The subconscious mind never sleeps; and I contend that the subconscious mind of the subject knows
that this "crime" is not real, that it is only a make-up, that the dagger is unloaded, the gun loaded with blanks.

Thus a girl will "murder" with her unloaded dagger, but refuse to doğru. I am told that a girl once did, under hypnosis, divest on being told by the hypnotist that she was to do so to make a bath. The position held still holds good. If she genuinely believed she was about to take a bath, she did not care to be alone. Therefore, by disobeying she did not contaminate any moral either. But if any overt move had been made by the hypnotist, I guarantee she would have resisted him so she would not allow hypnosis to be intruder of her bathroom!

I do not believe that any reputable hypnotist would stoop to trickery of this kind, any more than the incitement of offenses by denials while their patients are under hypnosis would be justifiable. I feel not that anyone has submitted to hypnosis—otherwise the remedy is so delightfully simple, just take along a friend to act fairly!

To look back to the question of the "transference" of eyes. Just how and why is this affected? Once more, the answer is simple: that again I wonder in the lack of perception displayed by scientific investigators, the person, who fell asleep at the suggestion of a hypnotist, does it, observed to it, were, with the hypnotist and the idea of the hypnotist. Folded? The transference is accomplished, and the report sustained throughout the hypnotist.

Why of post-hypnotic suggestion? Here, the suggestion of the hypnotist is carried over into the waking state, but is not remembered by the subject until it is triggered into his consciousness by some such stimulus as a clock striking, or perhaps the hypnotist keeping his fingers or saying a certain phrase. The situation is analogous to the person who re- drone, and if the subject has had, until some occurrence, or chance causes, cease less to exist. "That's odd! I remember now—" I had a dream last night."

What of the subject's being able to hold a limb extended, in what would ordinarily be a very fatiguing position, for minutes or periods of time without apparent fatigue? The answer is that the position is not really as tiring as we imagine, and that only the consciousness of sustained effort makes it seem so. Proof! I have seen a student, bored with attempting to engage his teacher's attention, turn his own attention to this, the arm is held more or less in the usual position in the hope of the teacher's eventually noticing it; and keeping it there for an astonishing length of time—having forgotten all about it; and sometimes having forgotten the reason for it being there when the teacher has at last said, "Well, Jones?"

Let us now consider rigid catalepsy. A subject's whole body may, by suggestion, be congealed as "as if a basket" when his head and shoulders may be placed upon one chair and his feet and lower legs on another, with nothing supporting him in between, save his own muscular rigidity and an in this position he can even sustain the weight of the hypnotist lying on the subject's limbs. Why?
Because, obviously, we are much stronger than we believe. The hypnotist has not immediately branded the subject with absolute strength. Only the subject's own inhibitory thought of the "impossibility" of the feat prevents him performing it in the ordinary waking state. A man in an epileptic fit is prodigiously strong. A man enraged by anger, or under some other emotional stress—as, for instance, the necessity of shifting a weight in order to free a workmate—will perform feats of strength far beyond his ordinary capability.

Lastly, what can hypnosis do to help and heal, and why? Or, rather, How?

How we explore a fertile field, rich in possibilities and cemented to victims of whom the limits are as yet unknown. To enumerate a few anomalies in pain, when anesthesia is predicated because of some physical reason; curing of phobias and bad habits; removing of personal confidence and will-to-live; curing of strumma, hypertonia and blindness; curing of nervous symptoms caused by shock; curing of intestines and antianemic nerves; curing of bed-wetting, and even stunts of stomach ulcers and other "stress" complications. Finally, the cure of organic disease.

Why, and how, are these seeming miracles possible? Firstly, because of the unsuspected power of the mind over the body, and of a much closer mind-body connection than was formerly believed. It has been discovered that when an idea has been implanted in the mind by hypnosis, the body will often realize this idea in its own way. Thus, aims are carried by suggestion, apparently because the blood cells in the adjoining tissues cut off their supply. Conversely, a definite area will suddenly dilate of the blood cells when it is suggested that great heat is being experienced there. Symptoms of nitric oxide may be evoked quite rapidly. Who then define the limits of such treatment?

Why should ideas implanted during hypnosis be so much more effective than at any other time? Because in hypnosis we have the phenomenon of dissociation from the myriad distractions of the waking state, the mind removes, and focuses its attention upon the suggestion, with the receptivity and power of millions of brain cells which might otherwise be occupied with the trivia of life, world and work.

"How do I look? My shoes poison, What's for dinner?" and no such expressions remain true in expressing it, perhaps, but you get the general idea.

* * *

In the light of all this we have discussed, let us now turn back, as it were, and examine the entire concept of hypnosis.

Have we been the secret of many of the miracles of healing wrought by the preachers, by Christ and his disciples, by modern faith healers, and of such healers as Lincoln?

Some modern thinkers of the Church believe we, quite decently, on the ground of Christ's power, while on earth, using any power not available to any man. Hypnosis may well be the answer. (Finit.)

W. M. POWERS.
That pungent and slightly spoilt
in August almost made me wish
the Jeeves would come.

WHITE AUGUST (Michael
Joseph, 10/-, 238 pp.) would
come true in part, anyway.
A small full of snow to cool me off
would have been just right.
Of course, the weather-war in Mr.
Boland's novel has radio-active
snow, which threatens to destroy
Britain through disruption of tra-
taffic and in occasional flood and
floodwater. Fortunately, the
radioactivity reaches a lethal
level. Compared with THE SKY
BLOCK, Steve France's ( Hodder
Head, 9/-, 192 pp.) novel of
similar trend, WHITE AUGUST
is somewhat slow, the action
is not so intense, nor so exciting.
However, Mr. France justifies his
chronicles of war by a realistic
picture of the various government
branches and armed services who are
fighting (often not shackled down
with their own missilismannual red
tape) to capture a "Weather-
wracking" machine which is bring-
ing woe and drought to the
American Midwest. Spaces
and counter-spaces, civilian
Platt Vorse, co-operate for his
local hero, who is not only a
change of the combined ops, those
and few others in a small area of
land from the players and score
for THE SKY BLOCK. Mr.
Boland plays on a bigger field,
and so has more incident—oft-
times trivial—which tends to
slow his story down. Both are
the antithesis of space-ops, and
those who prefer action in this
class of science fiction will find
much to enjoy in either book.

But George O. Smith's HELL-
FLOWER ( Hodder Head, 9/-,
250 pp.) is space-op, not very
pure or simple. The Hellflower is
a flower-dog, by which some
implacable (mostly alien) are
undermining the Solar culture;
the unhooked, unskilled war;
Charles, Lamplight, and the
space-pirate who had the honour
of becoming the first man to
track down the dog-flower, and
unveils the extra-Solar villain of
the affair. Harpooned by a
drag-fished from the depths of
both sides (both Solitarians and
the aliens are going for him in the
later stages of the brawl) he fin-
tually manages to win peace with
these beings. There is a certain
amount of dodgy material (not for-
getting the 4.4-formula), now own-
shipped to himself, exciting, but
shallow and lacking the technical
rigour which goes a long way to
wards making a George O. Smith
story world-wide.

Space opera on the grand scale
is supplied by Brian Ashman,
and his THE CURRENT'S OAR
( Macmillan, 7/6, 256 pp.)
fulfills expectations. The theme is
the value of that of HELL-
FLOWER—"little men don't
worry makes great", but the
treatment and story are utterly
differe ted and (in my opinion)
on a far higher level. The story is
NEBULA

too complicated to be served up in a neat form, but the groundwork is a discovery by a "space-analyst" of a threat to a certain planet. Its sun is going nova. This planet is the key to a commercial empire, the farm-world for a galactic-wide product controlled by the Overlords of Dark. You can imagine the political and sociological theorizing, immediately available to many of the inhabitants of the world. And, well supplied with some exciting clues, battles—both gun and verbal—and a splash of romance, it makes a very readable story.

ANGEL'S MOON, by Alg. Brown (Rivendel Press, 9/4, 221 pp.) is something different. I read it, but once started, it was going nowhere. A highly industrialized culture, developed on the basis of a city-state, is threatened when its intensive cultivation is overrun by monstrous weeds. Raked from his post as a satellite station, Dr. Angelo Cardino is placed in charge of the efforts to save Hyperbolas. Had he been any more efficient, the answer may be in the methods of intensive cultivation, and seeks to obtain knowledge from the "unmarketable population" (anyone who doesn't live in Hyperbolas) outside. Some knowledge and skill he does get, but his efforts are thwarted by the politically timid folk of his own people, who rush recklessly toward destruction. Only a few Hyperbolas might be able to stay outside, enter to the satellite after the debacle of the world with their world, despite appreciating its wrong path. Mr. Brown is to be complimented on making a very successful story out of a somewhat difficult theme. It would have been too easy to dig into a straight series of the Collins type with this story. Happily, he avoids the trap. But he did, however, avoid that other trap into which fall too many established novelists, attempting a science-fiction story. The book is loaded with "science-fiction media terms, which never make a feeling of reality."

ALIEN LANDSCAPE: Joaquin Bache (Mansfield Press, 9/4) contains six of his short stories, of which I'd grade two good, two average, and two indifferent. It was perhaps unfair to Mr. Brown to get some criticism, but the good ones are good, and the others suffer by comparison.

WILLIAM F. TEMPLE'S MARTIN MAGNUS, PLANET ROVER (Muller) is aimed at the juvenile public, but should not be overlooked. The character Temple has created in Magnus delighted me. THE MINDWORM; C. M. Kornbluth, will be coming from Doubleday, under the imprint of Doubleday. THE CHRYSLIER, by John Wyman, should now be out from the same publisher. The American title is REBIRTH, under which title I read and thoroughly enjoyed a somewhat different treatment of the mutant theme. LOST DARKNESS (Hall, 2, 201 pp., de Camp, is a highly entertaining by-product of that fantasy classic from Unkown. This too should now be available from Heinemann. And for your general information—science-fiction is still sufficiently important in the publishing world to earn a page to itself in an August issue of THE BOOKSELLER.
Something new has been added to the science fiction scene: they're actually making science fiction in quantity rather than just talking about it. (That other factor, quality, still remains a desired quantity but they can't all be bad.) THE BODY SNATCHERS, which I'll review in a minute, is one of the situation that will now be commonplace. At least two new productions, or even three new productions, every issue of NEBULA, considering that principal shooting has been completed on "Frightened Planet", "The 392nd" and "Terror". And such scripts are set for shooting as "The Day the World Ended", "The Phantom from Space", "Nothing More Than Nothing" and "The Man in the Attic". (All of these are by Philip St. Severin, except the last, which is by Frank Quon." 

Scene years ago these two old friends of the science fiction, Karloff and Lugosi, co-starred in a horror classic, Robert Louis Stevenson's The Body Snatchers. The new film of the same name is in no way derivative from the latter, but rather a parallel story. "The Body Snatchers" is a true landmark, the Upsetters. "The Puppet Master", "Shadow in the Sun" and "Who Goes There?". All were published in Collier's, and then followed by Dell with a paperback publication. And now we come to the main point of this story: THE CONQUEST OF SPACE. And so do the pictures. The pictures were rushed. Continued next week.
billion times of God, they filmed what they bought?

What Walter Wanger bought wasn’t the newest plot in the world—neither was “The Puppet Master”, which John Payne left up to it to film—but there was a vitality in the telling that tempts falling to the ground.

A strange phenomenon in California start going to their driver and homeliness but insistently confessing to him a strange concern. They’re certain their uncle isn’t their uncle any more, a little boy refuses to accept his Mother as Mom. Yet a week have the strange symptom passed and relatives are acceptably quiet for what they’ve al

Is some subtle monstrous metempsychosis going on among the townpeople, or is there some mass neurosis at work here? The doctor discusses the problem with a psychiatrist friend and with his girl friend.

A part of the way thru the gas station a rocks pretty certain that there’s something supernatural to it, but the audience is directly played with, a la John Dickson Carr, so that connections are chal

But long before the hair-raising climax is reached there’s no doubt at all about our being involved by —don’t laugh this won’t when 1,000,000 EYES is a masterwork beyond compare! It is greater thin “The Mice from Planet X”, superior to “Invaders from Space” tos “Robots Monster” and will outstrip “Devil Girl from Mars” The Beast has spoken).

(Ask I alone myself now?)

(Plat is vaguely reminiscent of The Devil of the Black, strange from space. Semites polyvalent, replacing humans beings one by one until the entire civilization has become doppelpuppen from the void.

of don’t take these things seri

out but the acting scaled my wife to pieces. It builds up a gripping emotional effect. Paying pulled a real live rabbit out of the hat—out of the god—of the conclusion of this book, but, the entire shock value of the novel’s ending will give you to your seat. Science fiction fans should be pleased with this pic

As for THE BEAST WITH 1,000 EYES, I am afraid this will never be a best seller. My very good friend (and client, for that matter) Paul Kadoski created and produced the hand puppet (does that make him a puppet master?) that summons the people. It is the picture, and as a matter of fact the first appearance Beast is bare the puppeteer’s hands. It’s a lie for me now as I type these words. Still, I can call the picture ‘master

But behold! What strange bond is the Beast taking upon me? Those eyes! They taken my friend hypnothically! A strange power invades my mind, permeates me! Fascin

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WALTER WILLIS writes for you

All unknown to the mundane world, a unique little occasion took place in Dublin one Monday evening late in July. In the cabin of a large steamer in the dock was a group of various parts of the United Kingdom and sailing excitedly while the boat got ready to sail for Baltimore, U.S.A. Two of them were Ken and Pamela Bulmer of London, who were having their fare across the Atlantic paid by contributions from the rest of fandom. The others were English fan Chuck Davis, who with Middletown fans Harry and Pat Chatterton were coming from London to Dublin by train to see them off. We'd all met at Eden Quay, near O'Connell Bridge, and then I took them on a tour round the central Dublin area. I'm afraid this was unintentional—I was really looking for St. Stephen's Green, which the JBA had apparently stolen and hidden somewhere since I was there last. However, Dublin, being particularly interested in the fact that the public notions were all in order, (a transnational sense of them for their benefit and Chuck affected incredulity. "If 'Olly or Power's doesn't mean 'Vance'? he said piously, "I did a very silly thing in the Post Office this morning."

I walked down St. Stephen's Green eventually, in time for us to rest a while on the grass until it was time to go down to the docks. There we inspected the ship and decided it would probably last our the voyage, probably against anything. Chuck took photographs of the historic occasion and then, having been unable to find any place to stay, we visited had to get off. Looking at the Baltimore waiting for us from the rail of the ship I felt a sense of unutterable awe; this was the culmination of two years' work on the Transatlantic Convention, and believe it was really happening.

There was still plenty to worry about too. On account of the dock strike the boat's sailing date had abruptly been advanced more than two weeks, so that Ken and Pamela were arriving in a strange country three weeks before the Convention at which they were to be guests, with very little arrangements made for their accommodation. According to the letter, and I published a duplicated letter explaining the situation and realizing it to a dozen fans on the East Coast of the United States.

It arrived three weeks before the boat, and the response was wonderful. Representatives of the Baltimore and Washington fans—
John Hitchcock, Bob Pavlat and John Magnus—met the Bulmers coming off the unglamorous with two cars and dimpled arrangements for looking after them until the Convention. But they'd hardly got properly introduced to the huge crowd to their waiting room containing contingent—Larry Shaw, Dick Ellingson and Phyllis Fort—tote in from New York with another car and the key of a furnished flat. After an amiable trip of one of the Bulmers expertly offered them away temporarily from their other hotel and driven off in triumph to New York. At the moment of the call they were accounted in a flat let by publisher Dave Kyle, one of these areas one you see in realistic American films, all foetuses, wailing and people sleeping in hairpieces. They have no initiations of one of the New York fans has appointed herself their social secretary and given them a daily list of their engagements.

There you have one of the wonderful things about the odd phenomenon known as science fiction fandom: that you can go almost anywhere in the world and get a warm welcome. The Transatlantic Fan Fund is just as well-organized and enthusiastic as this individual goodwill, a development of the private funds that is previous fanzines. It is a unique idea, and it is owed to the London Science Fiction Fan and to Chicago. It's next aim is to bring an American fan to Britain, a thing which has never been done before. Most of us in science-fiction have reasons to be afoot for the generosity of American fans, and here's a wonderful way to repay it. Contributions should be sent to me at 170 Upper Newtown Road, Bed ford, N. Ireland. The U.S. fans to be brought over haven't been decided yet, but there's a strong move for Britain to invite Robert Bloch.

Incidentally it's not only the fans who have been helping. The publishers, including your own Pete Hamilton, have been more than generous with cash donations for the Convention auctions, and I'd like to acknowledge their help here.

Stephen L. Lack, Rocky Aye, Ratcham, Exon. 42 pages, 1/6 or 15c, per copy. This is the only major British fanzine in America, and this one has been reviewed here before, the reason being that I'm usually deeply concerned in it. A part of the entire issue is entirely the work of my co-editor Clark Harris, so I suppose I can stop discriminating against it for once. This issue is clearly and expertly produced with many of American Editor Arthur Titman's brilliant cartoons and contains lots of good material—especially a fascinating and delightful story with science fiction and science Philosophy rather than science fiction itself, including also Damon Knight's sensitive and desolate book review column.

Walter Willis
Wrote exclusively in every edition of NEBULA
Science Fiction
Day Ed.: Here are a few comments on the "Special Features" in NEBULA No. 12.

Frank, Ken Slater who says that Hobbits don't exist outside of Tolkien's book. Shame—you be never a little Wolf Cub? Haven't you ever heard that if Wolf Cubs and Brownies don't do their good deeds for the day they are little Hobbits instead? Not outside of Tolkien, of course.

Now for the really worthy letters. Let's take Frank Cow's first as he can be disposed of more quickly than Mr. Cady. He said non-existent "Imagination"! Now look, Frank, I've four copies at least of that non-existent magazine listing my bookshop sale right now. And if it's a matter of a matter, there's my complete collection of this art. I'll tell you before I might have been rich by now! "Malign", as she's known in the States, does very well indeed over here. Just because a magazine does not put up a British Reprint Edition's doesn't say it's non-existent.

John Cady, you say there is no Mr. Cady. Women are so silly in out of place in space-travel, eh? Now let me tell Mr. Cady something. Women are usually (a) smaller than men, (b) able to endure more than men, and (c) it is very likely that when space travel comes they and not men will be chosen to pilot the ships. Why? Because, my dear Mr. Cady, if they will need less food, less sleep, less oxygen and less water, therefore the rocket can be smaller. No, with the size that would be used for a man, go further with a woman piloting it. And as for women having a larger layer of subcutaneous fat they can stand more cold—which may be necessary—and being able to endure more, generally speaking also, will probably be far more satisfactory to space than ever men have been pioneers—Florence Nightingale for instance—or have tolerated conditions that men only find here—the "Angel of Dals Bion Poo".

So, Mr. Cady, don't be so chauvinistic about women. After all, when it is for a woman, you may be quite apt to be more interested in the woman who's written that letter. Which reminds me: how are you feeling? I could visit a planet without women? Hold?—JOY K. GOODWIN, London, S.E.6.

OKAY, NOW, YOU WOMEN GET OFF and calm down and leave us men to read our science-fiction in peace.

THE HAPPY MAGIC OF

FRIDAYTH

PEN—PERSONAL

LIFE PARTNERSHIPS

All Copy, All Illustrations, Printed, Bound and Published, Published and Has Photography Book by

EDNA HANSON
DENTON, MANCHESTER.
Dear Ed: "Decision Deferred" was quite pleasant reading but no more than that. The story seemed to lack any real depth of atmosphere. "Mark Lynes" is the same old unoriginal hero one can find in most pulp types. And, "Chill" has to return to him in the end. Rating: 5.

"Report on Adam": This was quite a good story. The only complaint I've got is why did Adam's mate have to come from a cave? No purpose seems to be served by this. If such was the purpose it was to punish him, then surely it would have been better to have it happen earlier before giving him to Adam? Why make it harder for the hero to stay alive by saddling him with an almost-adult girl with the mind of a baby? And no consideration is given to the psychological effects of the girl. Rating: 4.

"Rebellion on the Moon": This would have been quite good if I hadn't read it all many, many times before. I'm surprised to find Haldor's writing such a hackled girl. What gives me about this type of story is why should the hero get another moon? Why not just take the whole thing over, end it, and start the whole process over again? As the taking over of earth, care a Taker's Case about the switch of two-bit junior space-officers like "Johnny DeLapique"? It doesn't ring true at all. Rating: 6.

"The Journey Alone": was, I think, the best story in the issue. It has a few faults but I found it pretty original. Rating: 1.

"An Apple for the Teacher": All I can say about this is that I wish it would happen to me. Rating: 5.

"The Great Time Machine" was enjoyable. I'm not usually very
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adventures of the
Red Planet. Find out how
they escape the Red Planet.

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Dear Ed., Here is a talking
point for "Guided Missiles." You
will, of course, have followed
the work being done on E. S. P. and
Telekinesis at Duke University,
under the able direction of Dr.
Hill. It has occurred to me
that we may have a very good
example of Telekinesis with us in
the home football.

In professional football, it is a
well established fact that the home

keen on stories dealing with them
because we know so very little
about it that the author can do
almost anything he likes to get the
hero out of an awkward situation.
I think I enjoyed this story because
there was no real hero. Rating: 3.
The cover was quite nice, but
I'm a bit tired of spaceships on
alien landscapes. Something on
the lines of the back cover, done
to full colour, would have been
better. NEBULA's covers often
bear a striking resemblance to
still from "Destination Moon."

Documents (particularly "The
Electric Fan" and "Scientific
Previews") were all interesting.
However, I do wish you'd print
the full address of writers in the
intersections.

MIKE WALLACE, Hull

* Thank you very much for such
a detailed and interesting letter
of comments on my last issue,
Mike. I try with all my readers
would like to know the trouble to be so
specific, as this helps me to
know exactly what everyone
wants to see in Nebraska so that
I can get right ahead and print
it.

Of course, for those who
can't find time to write, there is
always the Bulletin Form.

Dear Ed., Here is a talking
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In professional football, it is a
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LOOK HERE—from page 2.

* * *

The French: "Where is Eva Bartok?"
The Americans: "Are you using real gamma rays in this movie?"
The Austrians: "Why are they coming home so late?"
The Germans: "What does 'Whoop-ass' mean in English?"
The Japanese: "Whoops! 'Joppen' is a very American word."
The Spanish: "Where is Eva Bartok?"
Now ready!

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