NEW WORLDS SCIENCE FICTION

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hosts
ABC-TV's
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playhouse

Out Of This World

National Network
June 30 - September 22

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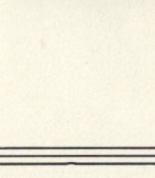
Guest Editor Harry Harrison

HOW much a word did you say?

What would I like to drink?

Bah, it'll never get off the ground . . . well, it won't get very high!

Of course I'm smiling — take the picture quick!



I'm ALWAYS glad to meet a fan who likes my stuff, particularly one as young and feminine as you.

Now—if the girl is seetee, and the boy isn't, and they . . .

So he bounced the story, did he? I'm sure he never read the damn thing.

Don't tell me Sturgeon wrote THAT!

NEW WORLDS SCIENCE FICTION

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TWO SHILLINGS AND SIXPENCE

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One of the most frequent visitors to our shores is American author Harry Harrison, who lives in Copenhagen and whose interest in international science fiction runs probably higher than most writers. His thoughts on the subject are far removed from the title of his editorial.

What Is Wrong With British Science Fiction

by HARRY HARRISON

There is really one thing wrong with British science fiction—the regrettable fact that it suffers from the disapproval of the Establishment. This is of course not a conscious rejection: we don't find it necessary to tell the entire world that they are strangers to us. One just treats the friends as friends. It is my considered opinion that science fiction is definitely Non-U in these isles, and has a bone-deep chill from seeing only the cold shoulder and turned back of this all-powerful Establishment.

Before I am drowned out by the screams of outraged virtue that I hear rising, let me quickly state that no, I am not a native of your green shores, and yes, my views could be interpreted as ungratefulness of the rudest sort. I hope you won't think that they are. My opinions are honestly come by and firmly held. The foreign eye *may* see things that are too commonplace to be noticed by the locals. Only in Scotland are travel books written by the local inhabitants. Elsewhere, the stranger is depended upon for the more universal and all-inclusive gaze.

I can claim some degree of local knowledge. As member number 0-150 of the British Science Fiction Association I follow fannish doings and attend as many conventions as possible. Over a period of years I have enjoyed the hospitality and confidences of both fan and pro. Your Editor and Mine has evidenced a much greater interest in printing my stories than many a United States magazine, and this attention is reciprocated by the pleasure with which I read his scientifictional threesome.

All of which means that—although a foreign cousin—I like to feel myself a part of the family here. But along with the pleasures of enjoying the repast from the family board goes the responsibility of airing some of the dirty linen.

For the benefit of the chap in the back in the dirty mac who just sneered *What's so great about American science fiction*? I'll answer concisely : very little. But transatlantic trash is another matter. If I'm permitted I would like to confine my remarks to the British scene.

The Establishment. Some people have suggested that it doesn't exist : that it is really only an attitude, or a state of mind. Well it was an attitude and state of mind that started the crusades and look what happened there. Of course there is no crusade being carried out against science fiction. It might be better if there were. Nothing raises the urge to give aid here like the need to extend the helping hand to the underdog. No, in these people-packed islands rejection usually takes a milder form. In the United States a coal mine scab who makes trouble for his mates risks being beaten up and run out of town. He would never be sent to coventry. And coventry is where SF is living right now.

Let me give you an example. About two years ago it was arranged that I was to do some science fiction book reviews for a well known London magazine. Months passed and no books appeared. The editors were apologetic—but they just couldn't get any SF books for review ! It seemed that the publishers didn't really like to publish science fiction, at least not when it was labelled as to its true nature. And when they did publish SF, no review copies were sent out. Instead, the books were silently slipped into the market. In the hope—I imagine—that devoted fans would search out and buy every copy and *real*

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The planet's orbit, influenced by two parent stars, was wildly eccentric, and gave rise to many problems for the visiting expedition. The biggest problem, however, was its effect upon both the local inhabitants and the scientists.

YORICK

by DONALD MALCOLM

It was the tenth fight in as many days. Flaring up like an ignited petrol can, the two contestants clashed and rolled about in the white, dusty soil of the Base area.

They grunted and panted and cursed, while a crowd gathered slowly, almost reluctantly. There wasn't much enthusiasm for anything on Apy these days.

The damage the men were doing to each other was far outweighed by the volume of noise they were making. Despite the strong wind, the two stars in Apy's system provided a generous ration of heat. Sweat mixed with the dust to the consistency of paste and stuck all over them in patches.

The racket attracted attention—eventually—from a number of quarters ; the Admin Hut, the Medical Hut, the Marine billet and the laboratories.

The huts for the Marines and the medical staff were on the left of the gate, the vehicle rank and the labs were on the right. The Admin Hut faced towards the gate. Running off at right angles to the backs of the Medical Hut and the labs. were personnel billets.

Sergeant Cutter and a couple of Marines strolled out of the guardroom ; Doc Whitehead, elephant-sized in his shirt and

shorts, came to the door of the Medical Hut, scratched his undeniable paunch, and wished that the ring would break to let him see. But he wasn't particularly perturbed that he couldn't. Various specialists sifted out of the labs.

Brady, the Preliminary Exploration Team Leader, his pugilistic face creased in perplexion, left his desk in the Admin Hut and stood wearily at the open window. He—and everyone else for that matter—wondered where the struggling pair found the energy. He watched as the three Marines casually shouldered their way to the centre and separated the sparring partners, who continued to dent the air for a few seconds with half-hearted punches. They looked like a couple of crude plaster dummies.

The crowd dispersed and the dust settled as Brady called, " Clean them up, Sergeant, then bring them here. We've time to sort this out before lunch. Doc—go down with the Sergeant please, and see if our prize fighters have inflicted any damage."

Privately, he doubted if either man was injured. Lately, there had been a lot of fist-swinging, with very little to show for it. One man had lost a tooth, but Doc had pronounced it bad, anyway, and was pleased that he had been saved the bother of pulling it. He hated the sight of blood.

Andy Douglas, the burly radio operator, glanced up from his notepad as Brady turned from the window. He said round his pipe, " Another one, Chief ?" and, handing the pad over, " This just came in."

Muttering something about applying for his boxing referee licence, Brady flopped into his chair and put the pad on his desk. Fingers threaded through his permanently tangled hair, elbows on the desktop, he read the message.

Douglas was watching him.

" Good old H.Q.," Brady remarked sarcastically, stifling a yawn, " as long as there's no fatalities, don't worry."

He brooded, adding, " They're as much as telling me not to disturb them !" Part of his mind realised that he was being emotional, but he couldn't summon the required effort to face it squarely, and admit that he wasn't acting as a P.E.T. chief should. Morosely, he felt sure that, when the courier rocket from the mother ship, *Starfire*, came in within the next few hours, its skipper, Norman Le Grange, would be carrying his relief papers.

Douglas exuded sympathy. The chief had to smile. The radio man reminded him of a soulful cocker spaniel. He could be relied upon to mirror faithfully Brady's every mood. The empathy was downright overpowering at times.

It still lacked an hour till lunch. Relaxing, he rubbed the bulbous potato shape he used for a nose, and started to recollect the events of the past three weeks, the duration of the time the team had been on Apy.

He wished fervently that the blasted Survey Department had never found this system, unique though it was, consisting of two stars and one inhabited planet, and only a cat's whisker off Earth Standard at that.

Both suns were main-sequence, the larger, about four solar masses, pursued a 41.1 year orbit about the smaller, of approximately the size and mass of the Sun.

The planetary year was 340 days, taking the smaller star as the primary. Perihelion was something like 84.5 million miles, and aphelion, 95.4 million miles.

The fact that set the astronomers at H.Q., panting like a bunch of gundogs was this : the big star had a periaston of almost 186 million miles (and an aphaston of 2,604 million miles). The orbit wasn't merely eccentric, it was lunatic. The astronomers spent a lot of time gnawing at their slide-rules, being unscientific and telling each other that it couldn't happen.

Brady knew what they were like from first-hand experience, which made him wince everytime he thought it. He had Archer right in his lap. Having no other astronomers on the spot to act as soul mates, Archer bent everyone else's ear unmercifully.

It was obvious that, every 41.1 years, the lone planet suffered a fate worse than death. The snag was that no one knew with any certainty the nature of that fate.

The alternatives numbered two. A news columnist, Barney Redfern, with a star-wide following, had dubbed the first one " The Tragic Divorce " and the second " Take Your Partners."

In the first case, the columnist had concocted a situation in which the large star was the father, the smaller star the mother, with the planet taking the part of the child. The parents were, divorced. Custody of the child was still undecided.

For 41.1 years, the child, having been snatched by the father, went on a forced excursion, until he neared mother, who grabbed her back for another 41.1 years. And so it went on,

41.1 years with one star, 41.1 years with other, in an eternal struggle.

"Take Your Partners," again revealed Redfern's firm grasp of the essentials involved and he took and held the interest of people of a hundred worlds, who had become blase to the wonders of science and of space.

Redfern imagined the two stars to be males in pursuit of the same girl (the planet) at a dance. Unable to decide which one to choose, she danced a series of figure-8s round them, until, finally, the small male won the day, and the large one went off into the outer darkness for 41.1 years, returning at the end of that time to pledge his hopeless troth anew.

This (so Archer kept reminding everyone) was the 3-body problem to end all 3-body problems. Enough astronomers and mathematicians to pack the frame of the 300-inch Anderson reflector on Luna from end to end were working on it, with the aid of the latest in high-speed digital computers.

Despite his personal faults, Archer was an excellent astronomer and a very precise observer, and he was providing the basic data for the computers.

The planet's principal land mass, about equal in area to the Americas, was shaped like a skull in profile, facing west. It was neatly bisected by the equator and was connected by a land bridge, extending from the base of the skull, to an Australia-sized continent shaped like a hand with three stumpy fingers, the middle one providing the link.

Someone had wittily suggested that they name the planet "Alas Poor Yorick." A pack of frustrated Hamlets had howled him down. However, the name had stuck, being contracted to Apy.

The Base had been set up on the lower delta of a river that flowed into the sea through the mouth of the skull. That was about ten miles south of the equator.

The interior of the skull continent was densely-jungled with a periphery of gritty, barren plainland. One of the two mountain ranges lay on the profile in the exact position of an eyebrow, which became their name.

The other land masses consisted of two polar areas, both small, and a sprinkling of islands in the equatorial belt. The hand continent was mostly desert and mountain with minor patches of greenery.

The planetary population was concentrated on the Skull, mainly in the middle regions. The actual numbers, thought to be low, were unknown ; a survey of the many villages near the Base indicated that the lone world wouldn't have population problems for a long time, if ever.

The natives—what had been seen of them—were humanoid, pale, but healthy and inclined to be short and skinny.

The nearest village lay just within the jungle's edge, about ten miles away. None of the Earthmen had ever been allowed in, and this had irked Phil Burnside, the ethnologist, no end. As he had put it, and casting grammatical considerations aside, ' What use is an ethnologist if he can't ethnologise ?' Guards had always kept would-be visitors at bay. They had met the same reception at the other villages.

Brady respected the ban, not wishing either to alienate the inhabitants, or to violate the Charter of Exploration.

No native had ever visited the Base, in itself a curious omission.

Brady's thoughts were interrupted by a discreet knock on the door. Sergeant Cutter obeyed his injunction to enter. He was preceded by the erstwhile combatants and followed by Doc Whitehead, who eased his bulk into a chair, and scratched himself absently.

Sergeant Cutter was famous for making superiors feel like inferiors. In his immaculate tropical drill, he looked what he was : exact, efficient, a soldier in the old tradition. Brady always had the uncomfortable notion that the N.C.O., had shaved about five minutes previously.

Brady rubbed his nose and entertained fleeting thoughts about his lunch.

" Well, what's it all about this time ?"

" Sir !" Cutter's powerful parade-ground voice, minus the volume control, rang out. "The fight was inadvertently caused by Kelly when he mentioned that his home world would win the Spacomatic Finals this year. Revie took exception and attacked Kelly, who defended himself. Sir !"

Brady shook his head, like a dog with a flea in its ear. He tried to catch Cutter's eye, but the Marine was staring resolutely the regulation number of inches above an officer's cap. A look of horror crossed Brady's face. He was conducting an inquiry while improperly dressed. His cap . . . As if reading his thoughts, Doc passed it over, and Brady put it on with all the dignity he could muster.

With a cough, Brady thanked Cutter, then looked at the spatulate Revie, who, apparently, had at one time lost an argument with steam roller. " Anything to say ?"

Revie screwed up his flattened features. " I guess I got a bit riled when Kelly started crowing, sir." He couldn't think of anything else to say, so he wisely shut up.

" Kelly ?"

The technician had the appearance of a professional mourner. His shoulders, raised in a perpetual shrug, moved awkwardly as he mumbled something about defending himself.

Brady said carefully, " I realise that we have been working here under some kind of strain, the cause of which is, so far, undiscovered. However, it takes two to make a fight and I can't have brawling becoming the Base pastime."

He paused, temporarily at a loss to know what punishment to inflict, one that would act as a cold douch on warm tempers. To jail them was out of the question. Every man was needed on a team. Anyway, the guardhouse was there only for extreme emergency, and this wasn't one.

Realising that he was the focus of a dozen eyes, and that he was taking a long time, he rubbed his nose and pronounced sentence. " Docked one week's pay and allowances, next leave to *Starfire* cancelled. Sergeant, dress that up in official language and have it posted on the board. Dismissed."

" But, sir," Revie protested, " I need that leave—"

" You should have thought of that !" Brady rapped, the coldness in his words surprising even himself.

The technician looked set to earn himself a court martial. A hand as unrelenting as a tax demand gripped his arm and firmly propelled him to the door.

Both men were subdued as they left. Cutter could be heard fathering them in a low voice, then he returned, gave Brady a disapproving glance, and sat down at a table and began banging, unnecessarily hard, Brady thought, on the portable.

Brady motioned Whitehead outside. When they had settled on the bench, Brady confided, " I'm worried, Doc. I'm losing my control over things, and getting as lethargic as the rest of them."

Doc scratched contentedly. " That's what the men are dubbing the trouble, Matt, the Lethargy."

" No wonder," Brady rejoined, emitting a gloomy rumble. " Work is being botched everywhere I have the misfortune to poke my nose in. Poor maintenance, sloppy observations, ruined experiments and an atmosphere that positively snarls with bad feeling."

The other shifted his bulk and sighed. " Everyone's complained about the affliction and displayed the same symptoms —listlessness, no will to work, reduced efficiency, irritability. There's nothing medically amiss with any of 'em. As healthy as bulls."

He laughed suddenly, a short explosive bark.

" What's funny ?" Brady wanted to know resentfully.

" I was just thinking what a malingerers' paradise this place would be. They wouldn't have to work at it, just lie back and let nature take its course."

Brady harrumphed and gazed across the dusty plain to the rising mountains, dark against the egg-shell blue, almost cloudless, skies. The glittering fringes of the delta were intermittently obscured by flurries of dust stirred by the wind.

" Have you any bright ideas as to the cause of the Lethargy?"

Doc shook his head and, for once, forgot to scratch. "None. But before you ask, some people have a higher-than-average metabolic tolerance, which provides them with stiffer resistance to inimical influences. That's why you and I, Burnside, Douglas, Cutter, Cain and some of the others haven't been so jumpy. Although, Burnside must be miffed at having so many competitors !"

" While I fear that I'm due to join the common majority at any minute, I must agree with your sly dig."

The ethnologist was, as far as Brady was concerned, out in front for the title of The Most Insufferable Person I've Ever Met. Only his brilliance in his speciality had prevented his ejection from the Service long ago. That, and his willingness to go into the field. Most men of his achievement had cushy numbers on this Board or that Committee and wouldn't venture on public transport, let alone on a space ship to unknown parts.

Burnside's temper had not been sweetened any by the native ban on visits to their villages.

" Where are Burnside and Cain, anyway ?" Cain was an anthropologist.

" I don't know," Doc replied, adding as he rose, " lunchtime, come on."

Brady thought no more about it. They would have left word on the duty board, although he couldn't recollect where it was they had gone. Down to the delta, probably. Cain had found some bones there and was as happy as a hound in a knacker's yard.

They strolled to the mess hut a small adjunct to Doc's sanctum. The original intention had been to have meals outdoors. The wind and the dust had effectively ruined any chance of that.

" Another thing puzzles me," Brady announced randomly. " Why won't the natives allow us into their villages, and why don't they visit us ? After all, we've made no overt action against them. Are they afraid of contracting disease, do you think ?"

Doc shrugged massively. " I doubt it. It's been shown more or less conclusively that diseases aren't interchangeable between alien races when they resemble each other physically, as is the case here." He tugged at his ear. " Maybe they have xenophobia, although it seems unlikely."

They went into the mess hut. Most of the technicians were already seated, as were Cutter and his small group of lawmen. One or two grouchy types sat by themselves. The specialists' table was sparsely patronised. Field work or experiments in progress often detained many of them.

Archer, their favourite astronomer, had cornered Littlejohn, the timid bio-chemist, and the team's taciturn geologist, Carlson. Each man acknowledged Brady with a nod. The astronomer's eyes were bright with enthusiasm for his subject, while the bio-chemist flashed a silent S.O.S., and Carlson was giving a good impression of a volcano about to blow its top.

Interrupting the flow of Archer's narrative about the improbability of blue supergiants having inhabitable planets, Doc galloped to the rescue breezily with, " I must say, Archer, the Lethargy doesn't seem to have affected you much."

Archer was annoyed at Doc's gentle ribbing. His prim mouth tightened like that of an old maid upon hearing an off-colour story. " I don't see you doing much about it, anyway." His pale eyes were sly.

The remark had as much effect on Doc as a raindrop has on the sea. Nobody ruffled him. He'd seen and done too many things in too many places.

" Well, now," he riposted, " you're our bounciest specimen. Maybe I could get you on the table, slice you up a bit." The way he drew his brows down was more comical than ominous.

There was a noticeable and immediate deterioration in Archer's appetite. Doc grinned, to show that there were no hard feelings, and the meal progressed amid unimportant chit-chat, until Brady asked Archer, " Talking about solving problems, do we know what's happening in this system, yet ?"

Archer bounced back into circulation with the alacrity of a dud cheque. " I'm waiting for verification of my own choice when the rocket comes in. I plump for the figure-eight type of orbit." He paused, catching Doc's eye, and said, " But, I—ah —I won't bore you with all the details, except to say that, if I'm right, the planet will soon be resuming a normal orbit, which means that the weather should settle down."

Doc inquired, pushing his plate away, " What was that I read somewhere about a ' solar wind ' ?"

" Oh, that." Archer dabbed his lips. " The close approach of the two stars generates what has been popularly termed a ' solar wind.' The planet has been swimming through a flux of charged particles from the big star. The emission could be either positive or negative, or even a mixture of both, with the bias one way or the other."

He could tell by the expressions on their faces that they were interested, but practically none the wiser.

The meal over, Brady and Whitehead had just emerged from the hut, when a jeep, containing Burnside and Cain, the former at the wheel, swung up to the gate, and honked. The Chief noted that they had come from the direction of the jungle.

A Marine admitted the vehicle and it was deftly parked in the rank. It was evident, as they neared, that the scientists were in a state of high excitement.

"You're still in time for lunch," Doc opened conversationally.

The newcomers exchanged glances. " Lunch can wait," Burnside decided shortly for both of them, his wide-set, grey-green eyes shifty. " Matt—can we go up to the Admin Hut ? I've made an important discovery ; perhaps more than one. We've been to the native village," he revealed as he mopped

his round, perpetually sweat-filmed face. Burnside didn't believe in fencing. His nostrils twitched, as they always did when he was excited.

Brady stopped walking, his easy-going attitude shed abruptly like a discarded coat. He paled with anger as they faced each other.

" I understood, Doctor Burnside, that I gave express orders that the taboo imposed by the inhabitants was to be strictly observed ?" His voice was very tense and soft and this was foolproof indication of the depth of his temper. He rubbed his nose furiously.

" Wait till Phil tells you his discovery," Cain put in, his darkly handsome features betraying his eagerness.

Brady's eyes swept back to Burnside, taking in details of the large, shapeless ears, each with its lonely tuft of thin hair. " Right," he ground out, walking on, " explain and make it good, or I'll have you dismissed the Service immediately."

They entered the hut. As Brady sat behind his desk, Burnside's efforts to restrain a retort were obvious. He drew a sharp breath.

" I've found out why we can't get in to see the natives, and why they don't come to visit us," he stated, looking from Brady to Doc, who had parked himself at the side of the desk.

" Go on." The tone was still below zero.

" They're in some kind of suspended animation."

The statement was as bald and unadorned as Burnside's pate ; it was enough to snap Brady's membrane-thin patience. " I want an explanation, not a fairy story," he said quietly.

God, he thought to himself, as he stared at Burnside's angry glare, *I'm losing my grip. I can't think straight. My mind's flying panic signals and I can't do anything about it.*

Burnside opened his mouth to protest, only to be edged out by Doc. " It doesn't have to be a fairy tale, Matt." Scratching his paunch, he amplified, " Three hundred years ago, doctors on Earth could induce a condition akin to suspended animation with the use of a South American arrow poison, curare. Medical science discovered other drugs that had the same effect, admittedly for only short periods."

Following up quickly, Burnside prompted, " I suggest you come and see for yourself. Incidentally, we didn't have to sneak by the guards. They're all dead."

The Chief's head jerked. " Dead ? How ?"

" Oh, there's no sign of violence, if that's what you're thinking." He was calm again. " They look as if they've just died. No anguished grimaces or expressions of horror. They appear contented—that's exactly the word to describe it—after having completed some sacred duty."

They took a jeep and headed for the village, following the river until it was time to cut into the jungle of thick, tough trees that crowded in like spectators at a road accident. Gaudy blossoms gathered, as if paying homage, at their bases.

Two of the guards were lying just off the right side of the track. Both were fully stretched out, their arms by their side. The short tunics were neat and clean. Weapons were arranged near both heads, which were bathed in filtered sunlight.

" They lay down to die." Doc's voice had the melancholy conviction of a preacher. His face was slightly awed and sad.

" Quite probably," Burnside agreed in a matter-of-fact voice. " The others are the same."

" There's a ceremonial tinge to this," Brady observed. Then: " Shouldn't we move them ? Predators might get at them."

Burnside, who was standing closest to the corpses, said, " Predators have already been here, I saw their tracks." He forstalled the obvious question. " Come nearer and sniff."

Brady and Doc complied. There was a strong, indefinable odour from the bodies. " I think they smeared themselves with goo of some kind in order to preclude such an event. The sense of planning for death is very evident."

" I wonder what the next move will be ?"

" That's anybody's guess, Steve," Burnside answered the anthropologist, " but our next move is into the village."

They walked the short distance, accompanied by the many secretive murmurings of the living jungle. The myriad fingers of the wind raked eerily through the tree-tops and sunlight danced ever-changing chiaroscuros on the springy jungle floor. The trees around the village were almost denuded of blossoms.

The village was in a large clearing. The silent huts, square and solidly built of fibrous material from the surrounding jungle, were tightly packed along either side of a thirty-foot wide, unpaved street of hard packed soil.

About seventy-five yards away, facing towards them, was a much larger edition of the ordinary dwelling huts. Burnside

saved them the trouble of investigating by explaining that the door they could see was the only opening of any kind that he and Cain had discovered. He didn't rule out the possibility of ventilation on the flat roof, thirty feet above their heads.

" This is the communal hut," the ethnologist said. "We'll have to climb up on to the platform."

" How did you get in ?" Brady was puzzled as the stout door resisted his efforts to open it.

" We didn't actually get in," Cain replied. " The door's barred from the inside."

He led the way round to the left side of the hut, and indicated a fist-sized opening where some fibres had parted. Brady accepted the proferred torch and shone it through the gap. The beam impaled tier upon tier of humanoid natives, wrapped in gloom.

" Believe me now, Matt ?" Burnside demanded, triumph in his words.

" I suppose so," he conceded slowly, handing the torch to Doc, who produced a pair of spectacles, and peered in.

Brady had often heard of ' a change in the atmosphere '; this was the first time he had ever experienced the feeling, and he didn't relish it. The innocent talk of the jungle had become suddenly sinister.

" How long have they been there, do you think ?"

Burnside faced Doc. " About three years or more."

Even the jungle seemed to pause in wonder at the statement.

Brady pushed back the silence. " How do you know ?"

" Follow me and I'll show you." Burnside went behind the nearest hut and stopped before a rubbish dump, a deep hole in the ground. "Everything gets heaved out of the back window."

" Ah, civilisation !" Doc murmured blandly.

Burnside's mouth tightened, but he went on, " I carried out some tests on dumps selected at random. Nothing fresh has been thrown into them for at least the length of time I mentioned. I can confirm my tests back at Base." He shepherded them out to the street again. " It proves that locals haven't eaten for that time, therefore they must have been in the communal hut, in suspended animation."

" The key to mankind's dream of immortality," Doc said, peering around him. " If we could discover the secret, think how it would benefit the human race : everything from intricate, prolonged surgery, to really deep penetration into interstellar space."

More practically, Brady wanted to know, " Where did the guards live ?"

Burnside pointed to the hut opposite, nearest the left hand side of the communal hut. " It's the only one with that air of occupation about it. All the others have been carefully cleaned and tidied up. Just something else to support my conclusions."

" Let's get back to Base," Brady suggested, " there's nothing more we can do here for the present."

Doc and Brady, at the wheel, took the front seats, leaving the two scientists to pile into the back.

As they drove away from the silent village, Doc mused aloud, " I wonder why the guards died when they did."

" We'll probably never know."

" Don't be too sure of that, Steve," Burnside disagreed. " There was a reason, part of a larger pattern, and like murder, it will out."

The jeep bumped along the track until the beach appeared. A muted, throaty, thunder reached their ears. The ship would be sliding down the sky.

At the back of the jeep, Burnside and Cain had fallen into conversation.

" Are you sticking to your decision to cancel the leave of the two men ?" Doc asked Brady.

" I don't see how I can do otherwise, Doc," Brady responded, " without losing the respect of the men. It was a bit stiff, I admit, especially on Kelly."

Whitehead gazed past Brady, at the river and across the plain where swirls of dust bucked and twisted like ghostly rodeo broncs, to the mountains beyond. " I don't think you'd lose respect," he counselled, at length. " Rather, you'd gain some. To admit you made a harsh judgment would be a hard thing to do, but it's a great prescription for peace of mind."

Brady grinned and tension flowed out of him. " You're the doctor. I'll double the fine, just to show them I'm not going soft, merely changing the punishment."

They could see the ship long before they reached Base. Landed half-a-mile behind the huts, on a flat stretch of ground, it glittered in the sunlight, poised like a silver pen about to write man's story on the sky.

Without exception, everyone was up at the ship, chatting with friends. helping to unload supplies and load specimens.

Brady met Sergeant Cutter, who was escorting the skipper of the courier vessel, Norman Le Grange.

Both men saluted Brady, Then he shook hands with Le Grange, a tall, sparse man with a humour-lined face.

" Hi, Matt. This is a fine place to exercise one's space legs." He looked around him.

Cutter coughed loudly. " If you will not be needing me, sir—?"

" One thing, please, Sergeant, if you could send Kelly and Revie down to the hut."

He didn't have to explain what for. With the ghost of a smile, Cutter saluted and turned back to the ship, his back as stiff as a board.

Smiling after him, Le Grange said, " There's a strong rumour on the loose that the Brass are going to commission Sergeant Cutter."

Brady registered disbelief. " I think that would meet with everyone's approval—except his. In all the three hundred years of soldiering tradition, there's never been a single officer." He thought for a second. "Oh yes, there was one. He was breveted on the field, and shot five minutes later for his impertinence ! He's Cutter's skeleton in the cupboard."

Le Grange laughed infectiously and teased Brady, " You seem to know a great deal about Cutter."

" I'm his number one fan," Brady answered, his face straight.

As they entered the hut, the skipper said seriously, " Why is everyone so edgy, here, Matt ? I noticed it as soon as I left the ship. Your men's nerves are as taut as chorus girls' suspenders."

" That's the big question of our time," Brady said feelingly, motioning Le Grange to a chair. " In one degree or another, we've all been the same."

The tall man suggested facetiously, " It must be something in the air."

" Ha !" Brady snorted without enthusiasm and rubbed his nose vigorously. " Any despatches for me ?"

The sealed wallet was passed over.

Brady eyed it as if it had developed a tongue and stuck it out at him. He pressed his right thumb to his personal whorl-pattern. " I don't know why they persist in this charade. Someone's been at the old spy stories again."

Le Grange paused in the act of lighting one of his tiny Sirian cigars. For the first time since he had arrived, he examined his friend's face closely, to be alarmed by what he saw there ; dull eyes, a continual contraction of muscles here and there, an attitude of surrender to worry and tension. *Man, whatever it is, you have it bad.*

Lighting the cigar and angling a swirl of blue green smoke towards the window, " Your mind is walking along a crazy pavement, Matt."

Brady reacted slowly to this remark and Le Grange went on, carefully, in case the slightest change of tone caused the leader to crumble into small pieces, which he looked as if he might do at any second, " We've met only friendly races in between the stars—so far." His thoughts drifted away, losing themselves in the unknowable infinity of space. " We haven't penetrated so very deep as interstellar distances go, only seventy light years, each one dearly paid for with many lives." The cigar crackled cosily to itself, unheeded. " Who knows, Matt, perhaps very far out, five hundred, a thousand light years, there is another race, spreading this way, carrying a banner of hate. Sealed wallets are a merely sensible precaution."

" You're right, of course," Brady conceded. " Everyone is getting the better of me, to-day," he added ruefully, turning back to the contents of the wallet.

Brady leafed quickly through the microns-thin sheets of reading. The astronomical report verified Archer's hunch about the figure-eight orbits. And the normal orbit would be officially resumed three hours after dawn the next morning.

" Anything to go back to H.Q.,?" Le Grange asked.

Brady scooped up a pile of papers. " Just the usual run of reports, Norman, revealing the mysteries of nature."

The most important item of all was missing, but he had no wish to go off half-cocked about Burnside's rubbish theory. They were probably running his, Brady's, personal data cards through the computers this very minute, so why pile on the last straw.

He stuffed the reports into a wallet, sealed it and, handing it over, cautioned the skipper, " Watch the bogey men don't get that."

Pocketing it, Le Grange rose, to Brady's surprise.

" Off already ?"

" I'm afraid so, Matt. I've four more trips to make, and they take time."

Someone knocked at the door and Brady smiled as he said, " Perhaps you could spare a few more minutes ? I've a couple of your passengers to see. Is my cap straight ?"

Le Grange nodded, mystified as Brady commanded in a severe voice, " Come in."

Revie and Kelly were as spotless as a pair of new buttons. Their salutes were precision jobs. " You sent for us, sir ?" they panted in unison.

" That's correct." He glanced from one to the other. They stared rigidly ahead, not daring to hope, and yet—Brady let them stew for a few seconds, before saying, " I've reconsidered my previous decision." Relief flooded two countenances. " Leave granted, fine doubled. Don't keep the Captain waiting. Good luck. And Revie—I think Kelly's world has a very good chance, don't you ?" he concluded slyly.

The technician managed a weak grin, unsure how to react.

" Dismissed." Brady ended his dilemma.

" Thank you, sir !"

Barely remembering to salute, they tumbled out of the doorway, and Brady and his guest laughed as they heard Revie and Kelly whooping like a couple of kids let out of school early.

As they strolled back to the ship, Brady related the strange find in the native village, and mentioned Burnside's startling theory. " Keep the hatches battened down on this, Norman. It's not in a report, yet. The pieces of this particular puzzle are beginning to make sense of sorts, and I want the whole picture before I try to hawk it to H.Q."

" Sounds sensible to me, Matt. Our bosses have faith in the men they appoint to make the right decisions and to do the job. That's why you're here."

Their hands clasped in the understanding grip of old friends. "Thanks, Captain, and safe journey." They saluted each other.

He stood watching as Le Grange climbed the ladder, pausing at the lock to wave, then entered the hull. Brady wished that he were there, too. Seconds later, a series of impatient blasts on the hooter broke up the bands of men and sent the crewmen scurrying to pop into the ship like mice down a hole.

Doc Whitehead said behind him, " Never saw two men move so fast in all my life. Kelly and Revie will be your champions from now on."

Brady grinned. " You make me sound like a damsel in distress !"

The ship rumbled to attract attention, and every eye riveted on the sleek, gleaming hull. She rose slowly at first with the dreamy motion of a released bubble. Sunlight challenged her plates. The sound of ten thousand forgotten war drums assailed their ears. Briefly, mach diamonds spurted a beautiful pattern from her tail, then she knifed cleanly into the sun-soaked sky. No one moved until she was out of sight.

" Funny how that sight never fails to thrill me, although I've seen it a thousand times."

Doc treated himself to a philosophical scratch, entering the mood. " It's not so strange, Matt. Man has always been conscious of his destiny and inwardly, he reveres those tools that are helping him to achieve it. By tools, I don't mean only the physical kind, such as fire and the wheel. I include different modes of living, social awareness, if you like. Man's growth in stature is the history of the use of concepts, both concrete and abstract. And the rocket is a very concrete concept."

Brady kicked a small stone and raised a commotion of dust. " Always means, never end," he remarked. " I wonder—do we consider God as a means or an end ?"

" This touches on personal beliefs," Doc hedged, wiping his brow. His dark eyes sought and held the remoteness of the horizon. "It depends, I suppose, on what a man expects of God, and what he actually gets. God made the universe ; he also made man. The former is proceeding from order to disorder, while man, ever contrary, barges on in the opposite direction."

" I agree," Brady said, pausing outside the hut. " But I must qualify that agreement. Man, as I see him, doesn't really like order ; he tolerates it. Take Society, the Prime Abstract ; he flouts and breaks its laws when he can do so with a reasonable chance of escaping the consequences, and yet he is inevitably bound to fight, even die, to preserve it."

" With a paradox like that around, no wonder we have tensions," Doc decided.

The alienness of the planet, which somehow contrived also to be almost agonisingly familiar, insinuated itself into Brady's confused senses. " Order, disorder, one God, or none—the pattern's too big for me. I'll take you on again when I've brushed up my philosophy. Come on inside."

" What makes a man a man ?" Doc pondered, following Brady, who replied in all sincerity, "Plain damned nosiness, if you ask me !"

" I wasn't asking you," Doc retorted with a grin. He shortened the useful life of a chair by settling his bulk on it, and sighed loudly.

Brady separated the astronomical report from the other papers, and gave it to Doc. " Archer was right."

Doc scanned the pages briskly. " Does it bring us any nearer to a solution of what's happening on Apy ?"

Considering, Brady gave his opinion. " I've one of those well-known ' feeling in the bones ' that we'll know very soon what it's all about. Everything seems to have happened, so far, to a time-table, which can neither be speeded up nor slowed down."

Doc was thoughtful. " I wonder if it's a Pandora's Box that's opening before us ?"

" Funny you should say that," Brady remarked. " Le Grange was saying that we have yet to meet an inimical race in space. Wouldn't it be the ultimate irony if it were here."

" If you're trying to ensure that I have nightmares, tonight, Matt," Whitehead wheezed, rising, " you've damn well succeeded. I hope they don't take exception to big, fat aliens like me."

He left Brady, his face squashed up between his hands, staring out at nothing in particular.

And through the long hours of golden dusk and star-fired night, the planet strove to shed the gravitational chains of the large star.

In the villages, with the setting of the suns, there were purposeful stirrings.

The last few lingering stars were like pale flies trapped in the amber-green flush of early morning when Brady was routed from a deep slumber by someone shaking him roughly.

He became aware of Burnside's moon-round face thrust close to his, and the ethnologist's voice, hoarse with excitement, exclaiming, " Matt ! Matt ! They've gone, they've all gone !"

Brady sat up too quickly and held his head as it started to spin, causing nausea to gag in his sleep-parched throat.

Burnside, about to start explaining, decided to pull Brady out of bed instead. The rudely awakened leader pushed him away. " Simmer down. What time is it, anyway ?" He pawed some hair off his forehead.

" Six o'clock," Burnside snapped impatiently, " never mind that now—"

Brady looked blank, then said wonderingly, " For the first time since I arrived here, I feel good." He grinned drowsily.

Burnside was muttering steadily under his breath, but he curbed his rising temper and began to expand on his first statement. He spoke slowly, for Brady, obviously, wasn't quite with it.

" Matt, I was out at the village at dawn, snooping around. The communal hut is empty and all the dead bodies are gone."

Easing himself out of bed, Brady went over to the wash-basin and threw some water on his face. " Waken up Doc, Cain and Sergeant Cutter," he instructed from under the towel, " and get the helicopter ready."

" Thank heaven," Burnside breathed sarcastically, going out of the room, " I got through to him at last."

" I heard that !" Brady yelled after him.

Within fifteen minutes, the five men had piled into the helicopter and taken off into the morning that was undaunted by the cacophony of insect and bird noises.

Burnside had already explained that he had followed a recently-made trail far enough to show that the inhabitants had gone in the direction of the Eyebrow Mountains. He had guided Cutter, who was acting as pilot, to the tracks and the Marine was flying low and parallel to them.

" How far do you think they are ahead ?" Cain asked Burnside.

The ethnologist, his eyes on the approaching peaks, replied, " Hours and miles. I can't say for sure."

" Have you fitted this latest development into your hypothesis ?"

Answering Brady's question, Burnside said, " In some way, Matt, the conjunction—we could call it that, I suppose—has some physical effect on the natives, as it does on us."

" Only they were prepared for it, and we weren't," Doc put in.

" Exactly. Over the hundreds, more likely thousands, of years that these conjunctions have been occurring, a ritual, a ceremonial, has been built around the phenomena. The suspended animation—a sign that the natives haven't been able to adapt themselves—and the guards who lay down to die indicate that much." His gaze was drawn again to the beckoning, morning-hazed mountains. " Unless I miss my guess, we're going to see the culmination of the ritual."

The monotonous stretch of the delta plain unrolled beneath the speeding helicopter, and they took time out to have a snack. Cutter was holding the craft at three hundred feet, and Brady instructed him to take it up to a thousand, and gradually to increase altitude as they neared the mountains.

By eight o'clock, the powerful rotors had lofted them to eleven thousand feet and the mountains were only a couple of miles distant. The conjunction ended at 9.03 a.m.

Suddenly Doc, who had been sitting up front with Cutter, exclaimed, " What a beautiful sight."

They crowded to join him. Dead ahead, where, seconds before, there had been merely a majestic tower of stone, there now shone an oval patch of light so bright that it made their eyes ache. It was about four thousand feet up, and covered an extensive area.

" The mountain seems on fire," Doc said quietly, staring at the spot. " It's like the eye of God."

" What is it ?" Cain asked.

" The sunlight's reflecting off something," Burnside told him.

" That big ?" Cain was dubious.

" Why not ? Anyway, we'll soon find out."

" Glide her in towards that light, Sergeant," Brady said. He took some rough sights and measurements and said hesitantly, " I estimate that light source to be at least a thousand feet across, maybe more."

" Bigger than a mole-hole," Burnside quipped, causing a laugh and unravelling the tension that had crept in unnoticed.

As suddenly as it had appeared, the light disappeared. An outhang of rock blocked off the rays of both suns and they could see that a huge pit had been gouged at a fairly steep angle in the side of the mountain. It still glowed faintly against the surrounding dark mass.

" Radio-activity ?" Cain sounded half-afraid to pronounce the words.

Brady shook his head. " Reflected sunlight, as Phil said, seems to fit the bill. In fact, the gouge looks like the last resting place of a giant meteorite."

" Thirty-one minutes to the end of conjunction," Burnside said, finishing off a sandwich.

Two minutes after this announcement, as Cutter wheeled the machine across the crater, he spotted the people. Countless thousands of them, gathered around the lip.

" Quickly," Brady ordered, rubbing his nose furiously, " land the ship. Not too near ; there." He pointed to a fairly flat area about four hundred yards east of the crater.

Cutter dropped the helicopter skilfully on the spot.

" We're taking a great risk," Doc cautioned, as Cutter shut off the motors. " We must be about to witness a sacred, age-old ritual."

" Let's not waste any time in getting a ring-side seat, then," Burnside retorted, jumping to the ground. Immediately, the strong hand of the wind plucked at him, almost knocking him down. It was blowing in the direction of the crater.

Brady had detailed Cutter to guard the helicopter, with instructions to bring her in on the double if Brady called for help on his small radio.

The wind hurried them along like an unctuous usher, making them slip and scramble, as if it were anxious to get them to their places for the rise of the curtain.

For a moment, the wind dropped and they heard the almost dirgeful singing of thousands of alien voices, echoing and mellifluous, among the rocks.

Its hypnotic effect drew them on, oblivious to stubbed toes and barked shins, until they were overlooking the vast, deep, crater. The nearer natives were less than a hundred feet away, and the lip of the crater only a further three hundred feet beyond that.

Three more minutes to the termination of conjunction.

" Look, look !" Doc whispered eagerly ; he had seen the bodies of the guards.

There were, in fact, hundreds of brightly draped figures, all on litters, poised around the edge of the hole. Each had an attendant.

The singing changed subtly in rhythm, resembling the beating of a huge heart.

The men were startled as the larger star, passing briefly across an opening, sent a searing beam of light stabbing from the upper wall of the crater.

The singing reached a crescendo and stopped.

When they had recovered their vission, the litters had gone from view.

The planet was free.

It was a minute or two before Brady noticed that they had company.

Four days later, after friendly relations had been established with the inhabitants, Brady and Doc were sunning themselves outside the Admin Hut, when Burnside, Archer, and Carlson, the geologist, joined them.

" We've finally pieced it all together," Burnside began the explanation. " As I thought, everything was part of an elaborate ceremony. The Guide—headman—of the nearest village is coming to visit you tomorrow, and you can hear the story first-hand for yourself. The reason for the inhabitants' behaviour is Archer's province."

Archer said, " The ' solar wind ' was the key to the puzzle. During the close approach of the two stars, which occupied a period of over three-and-a-half years, the planet was literally saturated by positive ion particles drawn off both suns by mutual gravitational forces." Mopping his forehead, he continued, " We've no way of knowing how intense the particle flux was, but it must have reached an alarmingly high degree."

" I don't follow you," Brady admitted candidly.

" I think I can explain," Doc said, scratching his paunch. " Briefly, negative ions make people feel good, while the positive variety have the opposite effect.' '

Burnside took up the story. " That's why we were all so irritable and nervy."

" Coming from you, that's a good one !" Doc joked, raising a laugh.

" And the natives, how did it affect them ?" Brady asked.

" They couldn't withstand the long-term effects of the ion-laden atmosphere. Too much exposure killed them." Burnside stroked the tufts of hair over his ears. " For once, nature had failed to help the people adapt physically, so they did the next best thing and took a prolonged nap during periaston." He

doffed an imaginary cap to Archer, acknowledging the source of the technical term. Archer's work had gained him a research position with Roy Galactic Consultants.

Brady glanced from their faces to the distant mountains. " Suspended animation ?"

Burnside nodded.

" How did they manage that ?"

For answer, Burnside opened his left hand.

Lifting the pale yellow and fuchia petal, taken from one of the flowers that bloomed at the base of every tree in the jungle, Brady gazed at it, fascinated.

" We don't know for sure, but from the way the Guide spoke, the drug that produces the suspended animation is the result of a symbiosis between the trees and the flowers. They grow nowhere else, and trees which lose all their blossoms tend to wither and die."

If Brady had heard Burnside's words, he gave no sign.

" Funny," he said, turning the petal over in the sunlight, " how man has long sought a kind of immortality and God, in His infinite wisdom, has enshrined it in a flower."

Donald Malcolm

'Gone Away—No known address'

Subscribers are reminded to keep us informed of any change of address to ensure the safe delivery of their copies as far too many issues are returned by the Post Office marked as above. Overseas subscribers are particularly requested to let us know in good time.

This is mainly a conversational piece about that old Time paradox of returning to the Past and murdering one's own grandfather. Mainly—but not quite.

PARADOX LOST

by STEVE HALL

The party was fast running out of steam. Only one of the five and a half couples in the room were still moving around the floor in time to the late night dance music drifting from the transistor set on the cocktail cabinet near Riley. And even they looked like clockwork toys who needed a rewind. Four other couples sat, sprawled, or stretched out on various items of furniture or each other. At 1 a.m., and after several hard hours of funning it up, even the fittest were only barely surviving.

Riley looked up from the advocaat and lemonade he was nursing, wondering why Rhonda was taking so long before lowering the boom.

Dead on cue, she came in, looking fresher than new paint.

Riley knew what was coming next and rotated the volume control spinwheel half a rev anti-clockwise. The music faded away.

"Time kiddie-winkies, please," she said pleasantly, "time to wrap up and go home."

Rhonda paused near Riley's chair, leaned over, and slyly bit the lobe of his left ear, whispering, "But not you, darling."

"Not just yet."

She drifted around encouraging the erstwhile revellers on their way. When the last one had departed, the tall, slender

brunette came back and sat on his lap. She looked appraisingly into his face, and followed the look with a firm, hungry kiss. In spite of himself or because of himself—he didn't know which—Riley responded with equal passion.

An hour later, more than a little regretfully, he descended the few steps to the pavement outside, where his Bentley circa 1930 stood alone.

It had been a damn good party, he reflected, nostalgia crowding into his mind like a warm mist ; it was going to be quite a wrench leaving them all, particularly Rhonda. But tonight would have to be the last time. His mood became more cold-blooded ; if you wanted to get somewhere, be someone, you had to take the main chance—and the best way to do that was to marry Lipton's daughter.

The old boy himself, only had a year to go before retiring as the head of the research laboratories of Narbonne Atomics. His daughter, Stephanie, had been Mike Riley's lab assistant for some eighteen months now, and obviously looked upon Riley's words as gems to be treasured. She was capable enough at her job, even attractive in a way—but who the blazes, he thought a trifle rebelliously, wants to come home to a lab assistant ? " You do," answered the scheming half of his brain. " As the old man's son-in-law, you will be well set to (a) become head of the team in his place, and hence (b) ensure that the cash you need to try out the practical implications of your private theoretical research is available when you are ready."

Riley fished out a bunch of keys and opened the car door. Before getting in, he looked back to where Rhonda still stood at the open door.

" Goodbye, my sweet," he called, and blew her a kiss.

" Not goodbye, darling, just au revoir," she returned as always.

He smiled and waved as he ducked into the driving seat. " Not this time," he muttered. " This time, it really is goodbye for the last time."

The old car's engine burst into life without complaint in spite of the cold night air. He let her tick over for a moment or two—old ladies and old cars are entitled to some consideration—younger females he thought cynically, seem likely to get none, it depended on the point of view.

Riley took one last look at Rhonda still silhouetted against the hall light, then eased the car into motion. Caution was the order of the night, he decided, the police have a quaint little habit of stopping late drivers on the offchance of hanging another drunken scalp on their belts. At thirty m.p.h. he eased off the accelerator squinting a little as the quadruple headlights of an oncoming car glared on the dusty outside surface of his windscreen.

Traffic was sparse for the rest of the way home, and the few miles were soon behind him. He closed the garage doors thoughtfully and meandered into his five-roomed flat. It was pleasantly warm and welcoming, thanks to the automatic heating system he had designed and installed himself.

" To bath or not to bath, that is the question," he said aloud, and flipped a coin for the answer. Heads said, " Yes," so he took a swift shower, finishing with a cold, needle spray that left him gasping, but wide awake. He stepped on to the scales, observing that at 12-7 he was a pound heavier than a week ago. " That," said Riley to the distorted reflection in the chromed surface around the graduated divisions, " that, is what comes of wining and dining to excess—you big slob."

Clambering into his pyjamas, he padded into the bedroom. One cigarette while he read the last chapter of the book he had almost finished the night before, then hit the hay, he thought. Forming the pillows into a comfortable support, he picked up the book, then put it down. The circle of illumination from the bedside lamp was not on target, so he tilted the shade to a better angle. Reaching forward to pick up the book again, he froze, watching the knob of the door to the lounge while it turned slowly and silently.

A dark figure wearing a belted overcoat and a well pulled down soft-hat slid swiftly through the doorway, standing afterwards in the penumbra surrounding the bed.

" Who the blazes are you ?" Riley felt furiously at a disadvantage sitting there bathed in light like a specimen under a microscope.

The stranger waggled a curiously shaped gun meaningfully. It had a slender, tapering barrel.

" I don't think you are in any position to demand explanations—let's just say you have an unexpected visitor, shall we?"

Keeping the gun pointed at the man on the bed, he moved forward a little, and sat on a chair in the shadowy area, stretching his legs out lazily before him.

" If this is a joke . . ." began Riley menacingly.

The intruder waved him to silence before the sentence could be completed.

" It's no joke. In fact, it's the most serious matter you are ever likely to face."

Riley's wrath began to evaporate. The man lounging before him could be a maniac, it might be safer to indulge him—at least until the unknown potentialities of the peculiar looking weapon were better understood.

" I can't pretend to know what you are talking about," he said in a more reasonable tone, " but if I can help in any way . . . ?" Riley left the question dangling invitingly.

" We'll dispense with the ' if '; my job is to see that you do everything to help."

" Of course," said Riley playing for time, " but you'll have to tell me something about it before I can be of much use."

The gun remained in line with Riley's midriff, as the other chuckled in an amused fashion.

" You don't need to know anything about it," he stated, " however, since I have a little time in hand while they recharge the capacitors . . . "

Riley felt uneasily that he was on the verge of a moment of truth, so the stranger's next words sounded surprisingly irrelevant.

" Suppose you saw someone attacking a child. What would you do ?"

" Stop them," replied Riley, in a succinct, if baffled fashion.

" And suppose again, that you knew of a certain course of action being taken by one individual, which would ultimately prove fatal to many ; what then ?"

Riley floundered on hopefully. " I'd persuade him away from his ideas, if I could."

The stranger forced the issue. " What if you couldn't make him see things your way ?"

" Then I would have to use force."

" Would you kill him ?"

Riley's patience slipped several notches.

" What the devil do you want me to do—shoot somebody ?"

" No, but would you kill if the circumstances demanded it ?"

" All right ; I would if I had to."

" As I thought, you're pretty ruthless," the intruder said, nodding in a satisfied fashion. " Now suppose you were thought to be dangerous—if someone else had your philosophy you would be in danger of being eliminated."

" True, but if you have any ideas like that, you can hardly expect me to co-operate."

" As I said before, you don't have to know any details and likewise your co-operation or otherwise is a matter of complete indifference to me."

The stranger moved his chair into the pool of light. At the same time, he slid his hat upwards with the hand holding the gun.

" Look at my face—do you know it ?"

Riley recoiled involuntarily. The face a few feet away might have been his own ! An obvious suspicion crept into his thoughts—the man opposite was going to impersonate him—maybe get his hands on some restricted information at Narbonne—it could bring a pretty price in the right market. Betraying expressions chased each other across his face.

" You're right and wrong in what you are thinking," said Riley's double cryptically. " There is some more you need to know though."

" What I'd like to know right now is—who are you ?" replied the suspicious Riley.

" I'm a relative of yours."

Riley laughed harshly. " Now I know you're lying. I haven't a living relation in the world."

" You didn't have one yesterday and you won't have one tomorrow, but for the moment you've got me," was the strange answer. " *I am your grandson Mark.*"

" And I suppose you've got your time machine parked in the garage alongside my Bentley," sneered Riley.

" No need—it's here in my pocket."

" Look, you've had your masquerade, now get out, or shall I call the police." Riley reached for the phone. His hand never got there. The stranger's gun followed the movement through a small arc and hummed briefly. The arm abruptly became as useless as a bar of lead.

The gun moved again, sweeping from feet to shoulder level. Riley stopped wrestling with his paralysed arm and sprawled grotesquely across the bed, completely immobilised except for his head.

" Perhaps that little treatment with the Nerve Master will convince you that I mean business."

The sprawling man blinked, his eyes and mouth were all that he could move—he was convinced. " What are you going to do with me ?" he mumbled.

" I could kill you and have done with it. I would be fully justified in view of what your future actions have caused."

Riley's mind spun dizzily as he tried to sort out the implications of the last statement.

" What have I . . . will I . . . ?" he groped for the right tense to use.

" You're half-way into it at the moment. The theoretical line you are following will lead to a thing that will be named the Gamma Bomb."

Grimly, the man from the future stared at his thirty year old grandfather.

" If you could have seen the misery being caused by it, you'd understand why we had to try to change the past—you cannot be permitted to publish your work. Of course, it's dangerous to tamper with Space-Time, but anything was preferable to the future which faced us. As your only surviving descendant it seemed my duty to try to adjust things." The words were spoken too seriously to sound trite.

" Look," reasoned Riley with desperate intensity, " I'm your grandfather, right ?"

He got an affirmative nod in reply.

" Well, surely, if you kill me, you automatically destroy yourself. *I'm not married yet.* I've read stories involving the time travel paradox of a man trying to kill a direct ancestor—*it can't be done.*"

" Wrong," said the stranger. " My mother—your daughter, has been conceived. *Weren't you with someone before you came home tonight* ?"

The logic was breathtaking and inarguable. Riley tried one last fling.

" If you'll leave me alone, I'll give up my work, I'll destroy my notes, they're all in my desk."

Mark relented. " I can't take a chance on your word, but I'll send you into the future instead of me. The mass-energy exchange must balance. The time pendulum has swung me into the past—it might as well swing right back, with you as the passenger."

Riley's grandson dragged him awkwardly from the bed into the chair, and propped him in a sitting position.

" How much do you weigh ?" Mark said.

" Twelve-seven," was the sullen reply.

" Good. Our two weights are within the tolerances allowable, and these will make it perfect." He took off his overcoat, hat and shoes, and piled them on Riley's knees. " Oh, don't worry about the paralysis, it'll wear off in about twenty minutes. After that you're on your own."

Looking like a strangely draped Buddha, Riley spoke for the first time in minutes. " One last question. What are you going to do when I've gone ?"

" That's easily answered. First, I destroy all your notes. Then, I take your place and marry Rhonda, as if I were you. I'll have to get ' called away ' before the honeymoon, of course. Afterwards, a convenient ' accident ' with no body, and a suitable will leaving everything to her so that she can bring up my mother. Last of all, I disappear and lead my own life, keeping a benevolent eye on everything from afar."

Mark put his hand into the side pocket of the overcoat and gently brought out an object that looked like an old-fashioned turnip type watch. He peered at the circular main dial. " Plenty of time to spare ; all the same, there's no point in delaying things. I'll set it for two minutes from now."

The time relay plumped back into Riley's lap, the sweep hand counting down the seconds to zero.

Mark moved away from the chair and stood watching. " By the way," he said, " if you're thinking you can ' time-hop ' using that—forget it. We are about to alter future world-lines, and in any case, it would have to be re-synchronized with a main projector."

Split seconds later, Riley vanished from the twentieth century.

The sole remaining occupant of the room felt suddenly tired ; he had no inclination for further effort that night, the destroying of the notes could wait until morning. He un-

dressed slowly and got into the still warm bed. Riley's discarded book was lying there. His eyes glazed a little while he mused over the possibilities which would exist in the new future unmenaced by the Gamma Bomb. His own life too, should be pleasant; he had details of all the significant events of the next few years committed to memory, and had no doubt of his ability to profit from that foreknowledge.

Mark scanned the cover of the book idly. A movement at the periphery of his vision made him look directly for the source of it. The door from the hall was opening . . . He lunged frantically for the Nerve Master on the bedside table, cursing the carelessness with which he had left it there. But the man stepping around the door was too quick. He waved a slender, ruby-tipped rod negligently and spoke in a quaintly accented voice.

"Not moving please."

Mark froze in mid-swoop his eyes eagerly seeking something to his advantage. Finding nothing obvious, he decided that discretion was much better for the moment, than futile valour.

The walls and contents of the bedroom wavered momentarily in a weird fashion, like a scene viewed through poor quality glass. The stranger seemed oblivious of the fluctuating outlines.

"Stay movingless ancient kinsman," he warned, circling warily.

Blinking groggily, Mark replied with a single incredulous word. "Kinsman?"

"Affirmative," smiled the man. "I have the honour to be the son of Riley's son."

"Riley had no son," said Mark confusedly. He could see, now that they were closer together, that the grinning face was distinctly oriental in cast.

"Correction," said the tongue clicking voice. "After transfer to future by you, Riley took wife, hence me at later date. Interference to our timeline has been traced to you. Alterations must be made. You must do as I say."

Mark's eyes flickered. Behind grandson II, he saw the lounge door move. A fantastically garbed figure was advancing into the room. Through the other door from the hall, yet another was stepping forward—female as far as he could see. Each of them held in their hands things which could only be

weapons. Behind both of the newcomers, the doors swung faster like demented fans, each oscillation bringing a fresh addition to the bizarre kaleidoscope. A babble of voices arose . . . the scene swirled crazily, becoming increasingly amorphous.

The fabric of the almost infinite four-dimensional tesseract that was Universal Space-Time, rippled queasily in a tiny node bulging from one small facet, then smoothed itself primly into a stable, different pattern, sloughing away into Limbo rather more than three million impossible alternate worlds . . .

Riley stared about himself fearfully, unbelievingly. His brain felt like a churned up battlefield ravaged by titanic forces. The tangled series of events moved before his mind's eye as if seen from a cosmic vantage point.

With dreamlike slowness, he picked up a book from the floor.

A perpetual calendar on the bedside table caught his eye, its date confirming his first shaky premise.

Acting on a sudden impulse, he picked up the telephone, dialling feverishly. A click told him that the connection was complete.

Hopefully, he spoke : " Is that you, Rhonda ?"

" Yes," answered the voice he thought had gone forever. " I'm still clearing up the wreckage."

" Wreckage ?" he asked stupidly.

" Of course—remember the state the place was in after the party ?"

Memory came flooding back. " I remember *you*." Again he was gripped by an impulse. " Look, Rhonda, I can't stand this place of mine, how about me giving you a hand with the clearing up—permanently ?"

" If that's a proposal," she began.

" It is," he interjected.

" Then the answer is yes."

" Stay right where you are," he finished. " I'll be with you in twenty minutes."

He replaced the phone and raced into his clothes with the fluency of a quick-change artist. During the return drive to Rhonda, Riley wondered whether he should explain the 'why' of his sudden decisions. He finally decided that she would be more interested in the ' wherefore '.

Steve Hall

Forbis had a compulsion to reach the 100th floor of the skyscraper—but he also had another compulsion which always made him get off at the 99th. Why ?

The Man On The 99th Floor

by J. G. BALLARD

All day Forbis had been trying to reach the 100th floor. Crouched at the foot of the short stairway behind the elevator shaft, he stared up impotently at the swinging metal door onto the roof, searching for some means of dragging himself up to it. There were eleven narrow steps, and then the empty roof deck, the high grilles of the suicide barrier and the open sky. Every three minutes an airliner went over, throwing a fleeting shadow down the steps, its jets momentarily drowning the panic which jammed his mind, and each time he made another attempt to reach the doorway.

Eleven steps. He had counted them a thousand times, in the hours since he first entered the building at ten o'clock that morning and rode the elevator up to the 95th floor. He had walked the next four—the floors were fakes, offices windowless and unserviced, tacked on merely to give the building the cachet of a full century—then waited quietly at the bottom of the final stairway, listening to the elevator cables wind and drone, hoping to calm himself. As usual, however, his pulse started to race, within two or three minutes was up to one hundred and

twenty. When he stood up and reached for the hand-rail something clogged his nerve centres, caissons settled on to the bed of his brain, rooting him to the floor like a lead colossus.

Fingering the rubber cleats on the bottom step, Forbis glanced at his wrist-watch. 4.20 p.m. If he wasn't careful someone would climb the stairs up to the roof and find him there—already there were half a dozen buildings around the city where he was persona non grata, elevator boys warned to call the house detective if they saw him. And there were not all that many buildings with a hundred floors. That was part of his obsession. There had to be one hundred exactly.

Why? Leaning back against the wall, Forbis managed to ask himself the question. What role was he playing out, searching the city for hundred-storey sky-scrapers, then performing this obsessive ritual which invariably ended in the same way, the final peak always unscaled? Perhaps it was some sort of abstract duel between himself and the architects of these monstrous piles (dimly he remembered working in a menial job below the city streets—perhaps he was rebelling and re-asserting himself, the prototype of urban ant-man trying to over-topple the totem towers of Megalopolis?)

Aligning itself on the glideway, an airliner began its final approach over the city, its six huge jets blaring. As the noise hammered across him, Forbis pulled himself to his feet and lowered his head, passively letting the sounds drive down into his mind and loosen his blocked feedbacks. Lifting his right foot, he lowered it on to the first step, clasped the rail and pulled himself up two steps.

His left leg swung freely. Relief surged through him. At last he was going to reach the door! He took another step, raised his foot to the fourth, only seven from the top, then realised that his left hand was locked to the hand-rail below. He tugged at it angrily, but the fingers were clamped together like steel bands, the thumbnail biting painfully into his index tip.

He was still trying to unclasp the hand when the aircraft had gone.

Half an hour later, as the daylight began to fade, he sat down on the bottom step, with his free right hand pulled off one of his shoes and dropped it through the railing into the elevator shaft.

Vansittart put the hypodermic away in his valise, watching Forbis thoughtfully.

"You're lucky you didn't kill anyone," he said. "The elevator cabin was thirty storeys down, your shoe went through the roof like a bomb."

Forbis shrugged vaguely, letting himself relax on the couch. The Psychology Department was almost silent, the last of the lights going out in the corridor as the staff left the medical school on their way home. "I'm sorry, but there was no other way of attracting attention. I was fastened to the stair-rail like a dying limpet. How did you calm the manager down?"

Vansittart sat on the edge of his desk, turning away the lamp.

"It wasn't easy. Luckily Professor Bauer was still in his office and he cleared me over the phone. A week from now, though, he retires. Next time I may not be able to bluff my way through. I think we'll have to take a more direct line. The police won't be so patient with you."

"I know. I'm afraid of that. But if I can't go on trying my brain will fuse. Didn't you get any clues at all?"

Vansittart murmured noncommittally. In fact the events had followed exactly the same pattern as on the three previous occasions. Again the attempt to reach the open roof had failed, and again there was no explanation for Forbis's compulsive drive. Vansittart had first seen him only a month earlier, wandering about blankly on the observation roof of the new administration building at the medical school. How he had gained access to the roof Vansittart had never discovered. Luckily one of the janitors had telephoned him that a man was behaving suspiciously on the roof, and Vansittart had reached him just before the suicide attempt.

At least, that was what it appeared to be. Vansittart examined the little man's placid grey features, his small shoulders and thin hands. There was something anonymous about him. He was minimal urban man, as near a nonentity as possible without friends or family, a vague background of forgotten jobs and rooming houses. The sort of lonely, helpless man who might easily, in an unthinking act of despair, try to throw himself off a roof.

Yet there was something that puzzled Vansittart. Strictly, as a member of the university teaching staff, he should not have prescribed any treatment for Forbis and instead should have handed him over promptly to the police surgeon at the nearest

station. But a curious nagging suspicion about Forbis had prevented him from doing so. Later, when he began to analyse Forbis, he found that his personality, or what there was of it, seemed remarkably well integrated, and that he had a realistic, pragmatic approach towards life which was completely unlike the over-compensated self-pity of most would-be suicides.

Nevertheless, he was driven by an insane compulsion, this apparently motiveless impulse to the 100th floor. Despite all Vansittart's probings and tranquillisers Forbis had twice set off for the down-town sector of the city, picked a sky-scraper and trapped himself in his eyrie on the 99th floor, on both occasions finally being rescued by Vansittart.

Deciding to play a hunch, Vansittart asked : " Forbis, have you ever experimented with hypnosis ?"

Forbis shifted himself drowsily, then shook his head. " Not as far as I can rememberl Are you hinting that someone has given me a post-hypnotic suggestion, trying to make me throw myself off a roof ?"

That was quick of you, Vansittart thought. " Why do you say that ?" he asked.

" I don't know. But who would try ? And what would be the point ?" He peered up at Vansittart. " Do you think someone did ?"

Vansittart nodded. " Oh yes. There's no doubt about it." He sat forward, swinging the lamp around for emphasis. " Listen, Forbis, some time ago, I can't be sure how long, three months, perhaps six, someone planted a really powerful post-hypnotic command in your mind. The first part of it—' *Go up to the* 100*th floor* '—I've been able to uncover, but the rest is still buried. It's that half of the command which worries me. One doesn't need a morbid imagination to guess what it probably is."

Forbis moistened his lips, shielding his eyes from the glare of the lamp. He felt too sluggish to be alarmed by what Vansittart had just said. Despite the doctor's frank admission of failure, and his deliberate but rather nervous manner, he trusted Vansittart, and was confident he would find a solution. " It sounds insane," he commented. " But who would want to kill me ? Can't you cancel the whole thing out, erase the command ?"

" I've tried to, but without any success. I've been getting nowhere. It's still as strong as ever—stronger, in fact, almost as if it were being reinforced. Where have you been during the last week ? Who have you seen ?"

Forbis shrugged, sitting up on one elbow. " No-one. As far as I can remember, I've only been on the 99th floor." He searched the air dismally, then gave up. " You know, I can't remember a single thing, just vague outlines of cafes and bus depots, it's strange."

" A pity. I'd try to keep an eye on you, but I can't spare the time. Bauer's retirement hadn't been expected for another year, there's a tremendous amount of reorganisation to be done." He drummed his fingers irritably on the desk. " I notice you've still got some cash with you. Have you had a job ?"

" I think so—in the sub-way, perhaps. Or did I just take a train . . .?" Forbis frowned with the effort of recollection. " I'm sorry, Doctor. Anyway, I've always heard that post-hypnotic suggestions couldn't compel you to do anything that clashed with your basic personality."

" What is the basic personality, though ? A skilful analyst can manipulate the psyche to suit the suggestion, magnify a small streak of self-destruction until it cleaves the entire personality like an axe splitting a log."

Forbis pondered this gloomily for a few moments, then brightened slightly. " Well, I seem to have the suggestion beaten. Whatever happens, I can't actually reach the roof, so I must have enough strength to fight it."

Vansittart shook his head. " As a matter of fact, you haven't. It's not you who's keeping yourself off the roof, it's *I*."

" What do you mean ?"

" I implanted another hypnotic suggestion, holding you on the 99th floor. When I uncovered the first suggestion I tried to erase it, found I wasn't even scratching the surface, so just as a precaution I inserted a second of my own. ' *Get off at the 99th floor.*' How long it will hold you there I don't know, but already it's fading. Today it took you over seven hours to call me. Next time you may get up enough steam to hit the roof. That's why I think we should take a new line, really get to the bottom of this obsession, or rather—" he smiled ruefully "—to the top."

Forbis sat up slowly, massaging his face. " What do you suggest ?"

" We'll let you reach the roof. I'll erase my secondary command and we'll see what happens when you step out on to the top deck. Don't worry, I'll be with you if anything goes wrong. It may seem pretty thin consolation, but frankly, Forbis, it would be so easy to kill you and get away with it that I can't understand anyone bothering to go to all this trouble. Obviously there's some deeper motive, something connected, perhaps, with the 100th floor." Vansittart paused, watching Forbis carefully, then asked in a causal voice : " Tell me, have you ever heard of anyone called Fowler ?"

He said nothing when Forbis shook his head, but privately noted the reflex pause of unconscious recognition.

" All right ?" Vansittart asked as they reached the bottom of the final stairway.

" Fine," Forbis said quietly, catching his breath. He looked up at the rectangular opening above them, wondering how he would feel when he finally reached the roof-top. They had sneaked into the building by one of the service entrances at the rear, and then taken a freight elevator to the 80th floor.

" Let's go, then." Vansittart walked on ahead, beckoning Forbis after him. Together they climbed up to the final doorway, and stepped out into the bright sunlight.

" Doctor . . .!" Forbis exclaimed happily. He felt fresh and exhilarated, his mind clear and unburdened at last. He gazed around the small flat roof, a thousand ideas tumbling past each other in his mind like the crystal fragments of a mountain stream. Somewhere below, however, a deeper current tugged at him.

Go up to the 100*th floor and . . .*

Around him lay the roof-tops of the city, and half a mile away, hidden by the haze, was the spire of the building he had tried to scale the previous day. He strolled about the roof, letting the cool air clear the sweat from his face. There were no suicide grilles around the balcony, but their absence caused him no anxiety.

Vansittart was watching him carefully, black valise in one hand. He nodded encouragingly, then gestured Forbis towards the balcony, eager to rest the valise on the ledge.

" Feel anything ?"

" Nothing." Forbis laughed, a brittle chuckle. " It must have been one of those impractical jokes—' *Now let's see you get down.*' Can I look into the street ?"

" Of course," Vansittart agreed, bracing himself to seize Forbis if the little man attempted to jump. Beyond the balcony was a thousand-foot drop into a busy shopping thoroughfare.

Forbis clasped the near edge of the balcony in his palms and peered down at the lunch crowds below. Cars edged and shunted like coloured fleas, and people milled about aimlessly on the pavements. Nothing of any interest seemed to be happening.

Beside him, Vansittart frowned and glanced at his watch, wondering whether something had misfired. " It's 12.30," he said. " We'll give you—"

He broke off as footsteps creaked on the stairway below. He swung around and watched the doorway, gesturing to Forbis to keep quiet.

As he turned his back the small man suddenly reached up and cut him sharply across the neck with the edge of his right hand, stunning him momentarily. When Vansittart staggered back he expertly chopped him on both sides of the throat, then sat him down and kicked him senseless with his knees.

Working swiftly, he ignored the broad shadow which reached across the roof to him from the doorway. He carefully fastened Vansittart's three jacket buttons, and then levered him up by the lapels on to his shoulder. Backing against the balcony, he slid him on to the ledge, straightening his legs one after the other. Vansittart stirred helplessly, head lolling from side to side.

And . . . and . . .

Behind Forbis the shadow drew nearer, reaching up the side of the balcony, a broad neckless head between heavy shoulders.

Cutting off his pumping breath, Forbis reached out with both hands and pushed.

Ten seconds later, as horns sounded up dimly from the street below, he turned around.

" Good boy, Forbis."

The big man's voice was flat but relaxed. Ten feet from Forbis, he watched him amiably. His face was plump and sallow, a callous mouth half-hidden by a brush moustache. He wore a bulky black overcoat, and one hand rested confidently in a deep pocket.

" Fowler !" Involuntarily, Forbis tried to move forward, for a moment attempting to reassemble his perspectives, but his feet had locked into the white surface of the roof.

Three hundred feet above, an airliner roared over. In a lucid interval provided by the noise, Forbis recognised Fowler, Vansittart's rival for the psychology professorship, remembered the long sessions of hypnosis after Fowler had picked him up in a bar three months earlier, offering to cure his chronic depression before it slid into alcoholism.

With a gasp, he remembered too the rest of the buried command. So Vansittart had been the real target, not himself! '*Go up to the* 100*th floor and . . .*' His first attempt at Vansittart had been a month earlier, when Fowler had left him on the roof and then pretended to be the janitor, but Vansittart had brought two others with him. The mysterious hidden command had been the bait to lure Vansittart to the roof again. Cunningly, Fowler had known that sooner or later Vansittart would yield to the temptation.

" And . . ." he said aloud.

Looking for Vansittart, in the absurd hope that he might have survived the thousand-foot fall, he started for the balcony, then tried to hold himself back as the current caught him.

" *And*—?" Fowler repeated pleasantly. His eyes, two festering points of light, made Forbis sway. " There's still some more to come, isn't there, Forbis ? You're beginning to remember it now."

Mind draining, Forbis turned to the balcony, dry mouth sucking at the air.

" *And*—?" Fowler snapped, his voice harder.

. . . And . . . and . . .

Numbly, Forbis jumped up on to the balcony, and poised on the narrow ledge like a diver, the streets swaying before his eyes. Below, the horns were silent again and the traffic had resumed its flow, a knot of vehicles drawn up in the centre of a small crowd by the edge of the pvement. For a few moments he managed to resist, and then the current caught him, toppling him like a drifting spar.

Fowler stepped quietly through the doorway. Ten seconds later, the horns sounded again.

J. G. Ballard

Mr. Rayer has always been noted for his communication stories, after all, he is a radio expert. The following story is a very different kind of communication idea—how to contact a man buried alive with no possible chance of reaching him ?

SIXTH VEIL

by FRANCIS G. RAYER

The transformer station casing, of half inch hardened steel, was finished. A single aperture, to admit a man, remained. Ralph Maperley circled the excavation, slapping brown earth from his overall. The casing was twenty five feet by fifteen, and ten high. Between it and the excavation sides a four foot space awaited the rapid hardening concrete. Eight feet of reinforced concrete would top the casing, to take the busy road, temporarily closed, from the city railway station.

" Think she'll last the contract time ?" a friendly voice asked.

Ralph nodded briefly. " Easily, Reg. We build and contract for twenty years, but this would last fifty." He surveyed the giant metal box, deep in its hole. Workmen were sealing conduit lock nuts with bitumen. " This is no ideal place for a transformer station. But a surface site is impossible." He glanced at the new, high buildings close by. " There's a lot of vibration, but the concrete and steel will take it. These transformers will be good as new twenty years from now."

Reg Curtis nodded. He was about Ralph's age, thirty, with a lean, kindly face, and was momentarily idle, his part in checking the steel casing finished.

" When will they pour the concrete ?" he asked.

Ralph checked his watch. " Not long, now. It's a rush job, because we're blocking the main road. The concrete sets in twenty minutes, will bear eighty per cent of its full load in forty. An hour and a half after we've finished pouring, traffic can pass."

Two large mixers were ready loaded with aggregate. Ralph anticipated an early tea with his wife Judy. Macgregor Electrics worked its employees hard, but Macgregor himself worked as long and late as anyone. A queer man, Macgregor, Ralph thought, as he moved to where the workmen were scaling up ladders out of the hole.

" I'll leave you to it !" Reg Curtis said briefly. " I've been here since four this morning, when the excavation was finished and we began on the casing."

Ralph nodded. The road could be closed only twenty four hours. When the excavators had finished, the enormous casing baseplate had been lowered. It rested on steel stilts, and there would be six feet of concrete below it. The transformers and associated gear had been installed, and the side plates went up. Reg Curtis was one of many men swarming over the casing. The enormous top plate, a single section, with its tiny manhole, had been lowered, secured. The manhole cover rested near, to be held tight by nuts run on threaded stubs.

A short, thickly built man of fifty, with a lined face and bright blue eyes, came from behind one of the waiting mixers. Macgregor himself. Ralph greeted him briefly.

" We're all on time, Mr. Macgregor." Actually, something of a marathon task—but that was not worth mentioning. Macgregor always expected marathon achievements.

" Good." The blue eyes were grave, the gaze everywhere. The lips were tight, sometimes twitched. They always did. " I'd like you to make a final check inside."

Ralph's thin sandy brows rose. " One of my best men has been through everything. So have I. The checklist was sent you. I was going to get the manhole cover on."

Macgregor nodded. " Yes, but not yet. I've seen expensive projects ruined by slight oversights. A junction not sealed, a coolant cock not opened, perhaps merely a tool left near a high voltage bushing. Simple things like that. When she's sealed she has to work for twenty years. Surface stations get a complete five year check. This station can't. It's vibration proof,

moisture proof, air-tight, because there's seepage in the subsoil. Once the pouring's finished and concrete set it would take a week to get inside again."

True, Ralph agreed. An electric lamp to clip on a belt still bulged in his pocket.

" Very well, Mr. Macgregor. You'll hold them off until I'm out ?" ..

Macgregor's angular head jerked. " Fifteen minutes should see you through."

Ralph glanced at his wristwatch. " Right."

He slewed one of the ladders across the gap, descending its sharp slope to the top of the housing. Tough steel rang under his boots. The manhole cover was near the opening, the nuts lightly screwed on the projecting stubs, waiting.

He lowered himself through, feet on the steel ladder below. Eerie gloom filled the casing. Eleven separate transformers occupied it, some nearly meeting the steel roof ten feet above. Farther from the manhole, a horizontal shelf, braced by girders, and bearing two layers of smaller transformers, divided the casing. Trunking, ducts, housings, girders and insulators glinted in the torch light. Everything was planned as a three dimensional jigsaw, with mere room for a man to crawl. Noises reverberated as if ten men were inside.

Ralph checked quickly but systematically, working along one narrow path from the manhole, towards the remote, two-layer end of the casing. Practically everything carried check tabs, already marked by himself. A master list, sent to Macgregor's office, confirmed each test. There was no litter, no abandoned tools, no dirt from workmen's boots, to dry out, form dust, perhaps drift in vibration, and settle on insulators.

The remote end of the casing, holding the small transformers, was hard to reach. They were braced together, and to the floor, walls, and roof. Like climbing through some steel cavern, Ralph thought. Noises outside came dully—heavy rumbles of machinery, traffic on the diversion, sometimes the ponderous sound of a train at the railway station. His boots made sharper, clearer echoes, small hammer blows. Once there was a distant clang as of someone jumping to the casing top.

Everything was perfect, the best Macgregor Electrics could produce. Built to endure, as Macgregor put it. A peculiar man, Macgregor, Ralph thought, as he squirmed round the last corner and began to worm back towards the manhole end.

Once, years before, Macgregor was trapped with half a dozen other men in a giant caisson thirty feet under water up by the docks. Macgregor was the only man to get out alive. The agony of waiting had marked his face and character for ever.

Impossible to hurry. There was one way in among the transformers and their mountings, and one way out. Ralph squeezed between the shelf stanchions, and could stand upright for the first time. He pressed his body along the narrow channel between one of the largest transformers and the thick steel of the casing. Ahead should have been the manhole, but no bright circle of daylight was visible. He frowned, halting, wondering if he had mistaken his way.

He played the handlamp beam round. It was all very familiar, a layout planned by himself, executed in a model, then built here in brief hours. The ladder was visible, and the manhole should be almost above.

The beam showed a circle of fixed studs, and a thin line barely separating a disc of steel. Breathing and thought froze. The cover had been fitted.

He sprang to it, pushing. It was as solid as the roof of the casing, immovably locked by many nuts outside. He shouted, hammering at the steel with the base of the lamp. The sounds echoed, but there was no reply, only the dull murmur and rumble of machinery outside.

The huge mixer engines thundered, the drums rotated, water jets playing over the aggregate. The concrete was of neutral expansion, to avoid stressing the steel housing. It had a very rapid set, so the highway could be re-opened with minimum delay. As the first batch was poured, Macgregor gazed into the excavation with a curiously fixed expression.

The concrete flowed under the casing, building up a six foot layer there. Waiting lorries re-charged one mixer, while the other discharged its load into the excavation. Men swarmed round, manouvering crane-suspended air-driven rammers, vibrating the mix to clear bubbles or cavities.

Soon the four feet wide space between housing and excavation walls was full, and the concrete flowed over the top of the huge metal box. It obscured the ring of bolts locking the manhole. After the next load, a sea of concrete covered the whole area, hiding everything.

Men and machines worked fast. There were to be eight feet on top of the housing, reinforced at one foot intervals by huge prefabricated grids. The repeated layers of concrete and steel mesh would easily support the highway.

Soon the full depth was placed. The air rammers, mixers and chutes were withdrawn, and a road building gang began to prepare. The initial chemical set of the concrete would be sufficiently advanced in twenty minutes for the gang to begin, after that, the concrete would harden quickly, a solid, all enveloping block with the transformer station at its core.

Judy Maperley examined herself in the kitchen mirror, touching her dark curls briefly. Medium height, slender, but with a deceptive mildness of expression, she wished Ralph would come in soon. Tea was ready—the kind of things he liked most. She checked with the clock. He was nearly half an hour late, and that was unusual. Perhaps there had been some delay at the transformer station.

She adjusted the tea things needlessly, stood at the window, watching the road along which Ralph came. Minutes drifted. Abruptly she decided to phone the site.

At length there was a reply, and she recognised the voice of a site foreman. The line from the temporary office by the transformer station brought a background noise of machinery.

" This is Mrs. Maperley. Is my husband still there ?"

" Ralph Maperley ? I'll see, Mrs. Maperley."

Delay grew into minutes. The phone brought a continuous roar, as of a machine laying hot tarmac. Then the man was back.

" No one has seen him for a bit, Mrs. Maperley."

" How long ?"

" Three quarters of an hour or more. One of the men saw him talking to the boss then."

" I see." Judy wondered if Ralph was already on the road home. " Did any delay keep him ?"

" Not that I know, Mrs. Maperley."

" Everything was as arranged ?"

" Yes—all the concrete was finished a half hour or so ago, and the road gang are busy." He sounded bored. " The road should be open again early."

" Thanks."

She hung up. She could only wait. The house seemed very quiet, empty, with Ralph not there. He normally arrived like

clockwork, as she had once laughingly put it. She had not known just how much she had relied upon his regularity, his always being there.

It was hot in the casing. Ralph sat on his heels, his lamp temporarily out to conserve the battery. His forehead and back were cold with sweat. He had hammered at the manhole cover, fierce with knowledge of his danger. There was too much noise outside. A heavy, dull sound, like a sluggish sea washing steel walls, had come, and soon been repeated. He looked at his watch and felt the distant vibration of the air rammers, and knew the pouring had begun.

Impossible to open the manhole from inside. The threaded stubs were welded in. A mere half inch beyond his hands was light, air, life itself. It could have been ten thousand miles away. With half his mind he realised this manhole was a mistake. A type that could be released from both outside or inside would have done. But no one had anticipated this situation.

The sounds of pouring were repeated regularly. Noises from outside grew gradually muffled, diminished, and quite suddenly they became very remote and dull. Ralph knew that the steel flat top of the casing was covered.

He noted the time. His danger must be discovered, made known, in fifteen minutes. Within that period the concrete could be washed with hoses and shovelled aside, and the cranes could haul out the steel reinforcing grids. After that time, the concrete would set, and all the equipment in the country would not breach it within a week.

He sought frantically for some means of signalling. A tiny hole, through which he could thrust a rod, would make those above aware of his presence. But there was no hole, no rod. Time after time he returned to the manhole, but it was as impregnable as the continuous steel roof itself.

Conductors entered the housing at several points, but most went directly into transformer casings built over the entry spot. All were sealed in conduit, and no conduit was larger than a man's wrist. The conduits and conductors did not emerge to the surface except at a considerable distance, and would soon be alive with lethal voltage. He had no tools, no equipment, and the whole station had been assembled to withstand vibration and use for twenty years.

Plans flashed into his mind, all abandoned as impossible. He could not introduce a fault—an open circuit or short—which would make them know. Conductors half the size of his wrist were welded, sealed. Every nut on every casing, stanchion, and girder was locked, immovable even with a wrench, if he had a wrench. There were no loose parts, nothing that could be opened, dismantled, unscrewed, broken or shifted.

Half an hour after he had heard the wave of concrete cover the casing roof, Ralph squatted down to rest. His clothing was stuck to his back, his breathing laboured. He realised there was little air. Everything fitted so well, was so designed to make the best use of the space, that the free air capacity was small. The encasing concrete was already too hard to break.

Judy's unease grew sharper, and when Ralph was three quarters of an hour overdue she decided to ring his friend Reg Curtis. Reg seemed surprised at her enquiry.

" No, nothing should have kept him at the site. I was talking to him a bit before they started filling up and everything was fine. Practically everyone will have left, except the road gang."

" Ralph didn't say anything which would explain ?"

" Not a word."

Judy felt puzzled, unaccountably afraid. " Could you meet me at the site, Reg ?"

" If you think it'll help."

" It may. Say in fifteen minutes."

She quickly wrote an explanatory note, in case Ralph came in. Buses passed the door, and one dropped her within easy distance of the site. Reg Curtis was already there. He indicated a short stretch of new road, where workmen were fixing curbs.

" The whole job is nearly finished, Judy." He seemed cheerful.

She looked round quickly. Equipment was being prepared for removal. " You haven't seen Ralph ?"

" Afraid not."

They went to the temporary office hut. A linesman was disconnecting the phone.

" Have you seen Mr. Maperley ?" Reg Curtis asked.

" No, sir, not recently."

" How long ago ?"

The man scratched his nose. " Maybe an hour or more."

The result was the same everywhere—no one had seen Ralph for a long time. Judy became more acutely worried.

They had been across the new stretch of highway, and questioned everyone to be found, when the linesmen came from behind the hut.

" Mr. Maperley's car is still where he parked it," he pointed out.

They went to look. A dark green coupe, which Judy at once recognised. She felt a shock of fear. Ralph would not go away and leave his car.

" It's been there since early this morning, when he came," the linesman offered.

Alone again, Reg Curtis gripped Judy's arm. " We must contact Macgregor, and make a complete check. I'll find the concreting gang boss and have him question his men."

He disappeared beyond the buildings flanking the site, and Judy stood alone. The workmen had nearly finished the road and she stood by the new kerb. It was odd to think of the new transformer station built below ground level, virtually under her feet, encased in the hardest re-inforced concrete men could devise.

She crossed the new tarmac, now cold and sprinkled with grit. A man was lifting unused slabs into a motor truck. She went back, and saw Reg coming from the road between the buildings.

" The concretor foreman is getting his men now," he said. " Fortunately they're all back at the depot clearing up before signing off for the day. We'll soon be hearing from him. Meanwhile, we're going to Macgregor's office."

She rode silently in Reg's car, dismayed at the speed with which every investigation was coming to a blank end. Reg drove fast, and they walked rapidly up the Macgregor Electrics building steps, along a corridor, to his outer office. A girl admitted them.

Macgregor rose from behind his desk. His face had an aged, pinched look.

" I said on the phone what's worrying us, sir," Reg Curtis said, standing. " We've not seen Ralph for an hour and a half, or more, and can't find anyone who has."

Macgregor chewed at his lip. Judy thought he was strangely tense. An undrunk cup of cold coffee was on his desk.

" I'm sorry," he said flatly.

The words were unexpectedly deep with feeling. Judy tried to explain.

" Ralph's never late. He always comes when he said, or lets me know. And his car is still out there. I—I simply don't know what to do." She felt helpless.

" Can we get back the foremen and gangs, sir ?" Reg Curtis put in. " We may be able to build up some idea of what Ralph was doing."

Macgregor nodded. " Try," he agreed heavily.

Judy saw that they would not accomplish much here. Reg took her arm, guiding her towards the door.

" We'll get started, sir," he said. " There will be a lot of men to question." He paused. " When did you last see him, sir ?"

Macgregor sat down in his chair, almost as if a dummy.

" About twenty minutes before they started pouring concrete. I asked him to make a final check." He looked at his desk blotter, face heavy. " I came away just after—there was a call from the highway authority."

Reg closed the door and guided Judy through the outer office, and along the corridor. Only slowly did Macgregor's words penetrate, bringing realisation of what they could mean. She halted, frozen.

" Ralph went back—down there—" she whispered.

Looking at Reg's face, she saw that he had understood. A white, pinched expression was on his lips.

" It—it's impossible," he breathed.

The next half hour was a nightmare to Judy. Foremen, workmen, concretor gang, truck drivers, always the same question, always the same answer. Lots of men had seen Ralph shortly before the concrete was poured. After, no one had seen him. The worker who had fixed the manhole cover said his gang boss had told him to do it. The gang boss explained uneasily that the concretor gang foreman had asked for the casing to be sealed. The foreman pointed to his time schedule, and said there was no contradictory delaying order.

The fear became certainty. She read it on all faces, most on Reg's. Ralph was sealed in the transformer station housing ! It was no one's fault, if not Macgregor's, but rather mere bad luck. Two hours and more had passed since the concrete had been placed and consolidated, and traffic could use the road. Unable to endure it all any longer, Judy wept.

The air in the casing was very stale. Ralph had wormed slowly through every cranny of the transformer station, seeking inspiration, or means of escape, knowing there was none. Now, it was too late. It they knew he was below, they could not save him. The concrete was hard. Dull, repeated rumblings showed the road was already in use. If someone suspected the truth, it would take too long to close the road, tear up the roadway, and attack the concrete. Power hammers, cutting torches, even explosives, could not reach him inside a week.

He felt extreme unwillingness to die. Life held so much. Unthinkable to leave it all, to leave Judy ! He swore at Macgregor's carelessness, at the order sending him down into the casing, at the man who had screwed on the cover. Simple, innocent events, each in itself harmless.

He sat on his heels under the steel roof, his lamp very dim. From the first he had understood the impossibility of escape. He had forced himself to hope, but now that pretence had gone, leaving surging fury at events, and a burning desire to live.

He tried to estimate how long the air might last, but could not. The free space in the casing was small, impossible to compute. Nor had he much idea of how long a given volume of air would last. He could only guess, from his discomfort, that the free air space was small, the remaining time very short.

Judy's face floated before him, dreamlike. He longed to see her, to be free, to tell Macgregor and the workmen what he thought of their carelessness, to cost a man his life ! Surrounding all thought was knowledge that the minute examination he had made was useless, that escape was impossible, and that the air would not last long.

Sometimes the heavy rumble, as of a distant train, came dully. But after the concrete was poured, sounds had been muted, remote. He wondered if Macgregor had felt like this when trapped in the sunk caisson.

Sometimes he got up, stumbling through the tiny spaces between the transformers, bruising himself, the dim yellow glow of his lamp reflected on steel walls, girders, conduit boxes, bushings, and gear. Once he fell, panting, and knew the end was very near . . .

Judy's heart was ice, as she stood by the new stretch of road. Tears had dried in her eyes. She could weep no more. Ralph was so near—yet eternities away, for ever.

" It's impossible," the concretor gang foreman was saying. " That concrete is hard as granite—worse, with the steel mesh. Using everything we've got, I wouldn't undertake to get into the casing in less than a week, even if then."

He was silent, and Judy knew they were consulting with the doctor urgently fetched from nearby. From the plans, some computation of the available air had been possible. The volume was remarkably small. The doctor examined the figures, face serious.

" I could only give a man six hours, at the outside," he said. " Three have gone. That leaves three more. Frankly, I doubt if life would remain even up to that period, which is the absolute maximum."

Judy pleaded with Reg piteously. " Do something—anything ! Don't just leave him there to die !"

He tried to calm her. " It's not in our power, Judy ! We'd be all working like slaves, if it were, if there was any chance at all—"

She knew what he meant. There was no hope. Ralph was as if already dead.

Once, she turned on Macgregor fiercely. " You sent him down in there ! You should have stayed until he came up, or told someone !" Fiercely accusing, she spoke from her agony of mind. He heard her out, not speaking, then lowered his head, and walked slowly into the office.

Later, she went with Reg into the hut. Macgregor was sitting there, sunken in bitter gloom. He looked up quickly at their arrival, momentary hope illuminating his face, then fading. They sat down, silent.

" We can't do anything here," Reg said softly at last. " It—it would be better to go home, Judy. I'll take you."

She stared at him, hollow eyed, somehow not understanding. All her thoughts were with Ralph, trapped at the heart of the huge concrete mass under the road. It was unthinkable to go away, though useless to remain.

Ralph knew time was very short indeed. Breathing was agony, but there remained the overwhelming desire to live. He did not want to lose his life, and bitterly resented events. He longed to see Judy, to confront Macgregor with his criminal carelessness.

Every cell of his being longed to escape from the hot steel room. Breath rasping, he wondered if Macgregor had felt like this, in the sunk caisson. Facts of the occasion were few, but Ralph recalled that Macgregor's survival had been called a miracle. All the others had died, down there. It was before Ralph joined Macgregor Electrics.

His torch showed a dim filament, giving no light. His groping hands touched only steel, unyielding—never to yield. A dull, throbbing roar filled his ears. He fought back unconsciousness, wanting to live. As in a dream, he saw Judy waiting for him above, with Reg and Macgregor.

Macgregor's lips moved. " It is not a dream, Maperley. It is teleaesthesia, direct perception of distant scenes. I see you, Maperley. You see me. Come—*come*—"

Ralph's fluttering senses faded into blackness, then returned, keen. Gasping, he knew life would soon cease, here. He longed desperately to live. The desire to be outside, with Judy, was overwhelming—a physical thing. Never had he felt such urgency of wanting, such motivation. It was so immediate, actual, beyond the usual scope of his five ordinary senses. It was becoming real—an overmastering desire to be free, to live, and it would not be denied. It need not be denied, because man had this capacity !

The heat went, the dull throbbing, the gasping for breath. Cool evening air swept into his lungs. Judy stood by the hut door, and Reg. Macgregor was in the doorway, both hands outstretched.

" You've come, Maperley, you've come !" Irrepressible relief in Macgregor's voice. " I was afraid I'd made a mistake —even after watching you all these years."

Ralph studied him. Everything had a new, vivid clarity, as if a veil had been torn aside, giving an astonishing look at the full ability of men.

" That—that's how you got out of the sunk caisson," Ralph said, understanding.

" Of course ! It needed the *motive*, the *determination*—the overwhelming desire to live ! Without that, you could never have escaped."

They stood silently looking into each other's eyes, and Ralph understood it all. Now there were two—Macgregor and himself. *This* was what man could do ! He looked up

momentarily at the night sky, until now peopled with stars unattainable.

Ralph smiled. It was worth it. And Macgregor had been sure. Men like Macgregor, *like himself*, did not make mistakes! And there was this new, unexplored, fascinating and wonderful facet of humanity. Teleportation.

Yes, it had been worth it. Ralph took Judy's hand. " Sorry you had such a scare, old girl ! Let's go home to that tea. There's a lot to tell you."

He looked back at Macgregor once, understanding.

Francis G. Rayer

THE LITERARY LINE-UP

Several issues back Joseph Green had a fascinating little story entitled " Initiation Rites " in which he developed psi talents in first-generation children born on an alien world. Next month, in a long novelette entitled " The Colonist " he continues with the same setting, producing a fine story of human beings fighting a strange taboo in which they are forcibly prevented from cutting down certain trees.

Amongst the short stories is " One Foot In The Door," by Robert Presslie, whose return to our pages is long overdue, and popular Francis G. Rayer has another of his strange communications stories in " Variant." Plus others, of course, and there will be the closing instalment of Brian Aldiss's " Minor Operation " which needs no recommendation at this stage.

Story ratings for No. 115 were :

1. Field Hospital (Part 2) - - - - James White
2. Late - - - - - - - - - Lee Harding
3. The Engineer - - - - - Joseph Green
4. The Pioneer - - - - - - - B. N. Ball
5. Conversation Piece - - - - Brian W. Aldiss
6. The Bundenberg Touch - - - H. L. Draper

The Professor's main interest was in the connection if any, between energy and Time. The result of his experiments produced a complex series of side effects which had vast repercussions upon his own life.

DOUBLE TIME

by P. F. WOODS

Some men love selflessly. Others, though their sincerity is just as great, accompany their affection with desire, leading to its inevitable reaction, jealousy.

But the most earnest of men must sometimes learn that there is a limit to sensible desire.

Such a man was Professor Curt Sloan.

He lived in twofold dedication. Once he had been single-minded, devoting all his energies to the science of physics, which he swore would command his life. When he was already established as one of the great minds in the field he met his wife, Elinore, and discovered that he had found something for which he would, if the unlikely necessity should ever arise, go back even on his life-long oath.

When the South Asian Confederacy attacked England in 2253, and the built-up areas had to be evacuated, Professor Sloan was separated from his wife in the confusion. For an entire year, while the war was brought to a conclusion and peace restored, he was wracked with anxiety, and searched the entire section of the Welsh hills which was his allotted zone, but no one seemed to have heard of her. When the population was

given the all-clear he determined to roam all over England to find her, but the authorities, with already too many vagrants on their hands, gently restrained him, pointing out the impossibility of tracing a single person throughout the length and breadth of the country.

Eventually he decided that the best thing he could do was to return to the laboratory and home where he had spent the most pleasant part of his life hoping that Elinore was unharmed and would have the good sense to do the same. There must have been many forced partings in the emergency, and there was no real reason to fear the worst.

Finding the house and laboratory in good order, he spent some days idle and fretful, watching the road along which his wife must come if she was safe. Then, to settle his nerves, he began to set up apparatus to continue his experiments where they had been interrupted.

Professor Sloan was interested in entropy as it was understood by Twenty-Third Century science : that is, in the passage of energy through time. It had long been realised that ordinary atomic particles such as the electron and proton consisted of nothing but energy being transferred from the past to the future, and that the famous anti-particles, positrons and negative protons, were energy passing in the reverse direction. But it was only recently, with the close-up investigation on the Sun by space laboratories, that the so-called *transverse* particles had been detected, and the possibility of energy passing *perpendicular to the line of time* had appeared.

The space investigators had found only transverse electrons and protons in the Sun, and there the work had come to a dead end ; and then Professor Sloan's own discovery of the transverse neutron, years later, made the actual transference of energy at right angles to time seem a practical possibility.

So far he had only succeeded in passing a few atoms at a time into the mysterious, invisible region outside the known universe and he had been unable to measure the consequences. He did not know what would happen if a larger amount of material was made to traverse. When small particles travelled in that way they simply disappeared, in utter defiance of the thermodynamic laws of ordinary physics. The professor realised that

ordinary classical physics could be wide of the mark as far as truth was concered, but to see matter and energy vanish in that way was uncanny.

He worked hard, Elinore or no, and after two months he was ready to make the crucial experiment. One sunny morning, he prepared to slip a hundred pounds of matter sidewise through time.

His laboratory was a huge converted barn. Large windows had been placed in the upper parts of the walls ; to the rear of the building was the library, and endless cupboards containing masses of electronic equipment. The mid-section of the barn was an orderly array of various kinds, which between them could reproduce any of the phenomena uncovered by atomic physics in the past five centuries.

Sunlight streamed into the barn in frosty, brilliant beams as Professor Sloan worked. The front section, nearest the big doors, was more or less empty, and it was here that he erected the linkages and devices with which he intended to push forward the frontiers of science another massive stage. Throughout the years, the barn had steadily filled up : it would not be long, he thought, before he would either have to clear it out and start on a new development, or else have a second laboratory constructed.

Summer was coming to an end, and it was cold on the concrete floor of the barn. These were the conditions he liked best. The bite of the air sharpened his intellect and made his movements crisp as he joined together pre-manufactured components : he had never allowed another man to do the manual part of the work for him.

Power was already flowing in the completed assembly, and he had set the controls for the transfer, when he heard the creaking of the barn doors behind him.

He turned round. Slowly they swung open, admitting great shafts of late morning sunlight and a cold breeze. Elinore walked in, smiling. Following her was John Hamilton, a close friend of Sloan's whom he had not seen since the start of the war. Elinore stopped inside the door and held out her hands to him.

What can describe a happy reunion ? For a time Sloan was oblivious of everything. His wife, with her long black hair, vivacious features and hazel eyes, seemed to him as beautiful as on the day he had first met her.

Finally he managed to reassert his intellectual bearing. " Where on Earth have you been ?" he questioned.

She laughed. " Sorry I'm late. It's a long walk from Yorkshire."

" Yorkshire !"

" Yes. And if you don't mind, I've only just finished it !" She found a stool and sank on to it gratefully. " There was some talk about missiles striking in the Midlands, and our part of the caravan was ordered North. Didn't you get my letters ?"

He shook his head, but not with surprise. The postal service during those days had been too primitive to deserve the name, and he had only once heard of anybody receiving a letter. " You walked all the way back," he exclaimed wonderingly.

" There wasn't any transport, and I just had to come back to you, didn't I, darling ? Anyway it's made me fit."

" It certainly has," Sloan murmured, still not taking his eyes off her.

Hamilton, who was wandering about the near parts of the barn with a faint air of embarrassment, peered inquisitively at the transverse accelerator, which hummed slightly as it warmed. "Don't worry, old man," he said jovially, "I looked after her."

Professor Sloan glanced round, and suddenly remembered his experiment.

" You're just in time !" he said excitedly. " Another five minutes and you would have been too late. Now you can watch me make matter disappear !"

He went over to the machine and carried out a final check, aligning the various parts of the apparatus to focus on the hundred-pound weight he had placed on a platinum pan. The others stood by, puzzled but interested.

He pressed a switch to set the process in motion.

The first thing he experienced was a sense of of suffocation, and of great heat. Then there was a roaring sound in his ears, and a livid flash. He gasped, and stumbled, clawing for the switch in dismay.

Even in those few seconds he knew what had happened. A faulty unit had caused the machine to become overloaded, and instead of carrying out its appointed task, all its tremendous energy had escaped and gouted into the laboratory.

He climbed to his feet, a strong smell of singeing in his nostrils. Hamilton was gaping, his hair frizzled and his clothes smouldering.

Elinore lay on the floor. Her patterned dress was a cinder. And as he went quickly to her, Sloan saw that her flesh was charred. One moment's inspection of the still-recognisable body told him that there was no hope of life.

Professor Sloan was not a stable man. Like all people with fixations, he was dependent upon the object of his devotion, and had little self-reliance to fall back on. Now every nerve in his body seemed to have been short-circuited, and his eyes darkened. He approached that state called catatonia, from which no human being can be persuaded to emerge.

He was probably saved by an utterance whose tone of disbelief matched his own. It came from Hamilton.

" Oh no, old man, it can't happen ! What have you done ?"

What had he done ? Sloan's mind flickered, trying to appraise the situation. He had killed. He had killed his wife. But why ? Why had Elinore died, and Hamilton and himself escaped ? Yes, he understood. The transverse accelerator created a field about itself, and the flooding energy had been channelled along its lines of force. The two men had stood in a sort of nexus in the field, a blank space, while poor Elinore . . . had caught the full strength of titanic power.

The accelerator was still switched on, the operation for which it was programmed uncompleted, and was building up the necessary potential which it had lost. Still benumbed, Sloan located the faulty unit, pulled it out and clipped in a spare. As he did so, a swinging of the meters told him that the apparatus was performing its interrupted function, which, he thought dully, Elinore should be here to watch.

He noted with vague puzzlement that the hundred-pound mass did not vanish from the platinum pan. It seemed that after all the experiment was a failure. Wearily, he turned away. Then he froze.

He saw Elinore smiling at him, fresh as before. Was this a delusion ? No ! Thank God . . .

A sort of convulsion took place in his brain. He found that the terrible memory of the past few minutes was fading, its reality dispersing like some fancy of a morbid imagination which had managed to flash into his consciousness. He was home, his wife was home, and, he convinced himself, all was well.

He looked at her closely, longing to take her in his arms. But now he saw that her face had taken on an expression of

wistful regret, had become drawn and pained. A pang of worry struck him.

" What it is ?" he asked gently. " What's the matter ?"

She shook her head and looked away.

" What is it ?" he demanded more insistently, taking her by the shoulders. " Come on, what is it !"

" Steady on, old chap," Hamilton's voice said with concern. " Remember she's just lost her baby."

" Baby ?" Sloan released her instinctively. " I gave you no baby."

And with that he could no longer ignore the oddness of the scene.

For there was something very definitely *different* about both Hamilton and Elinore. Some slight discrepancy of appearance, of indefinable personality, making them almost the same people —but not quite ; and by instinct he discerned a much closer bond between them than had existed before.

He scrutinised them, and elicited a point of fact. When Hamilton had entered the barn he had been wearing a green jacket. Now the jacket was blue.

" All right," he said, " how long have you two been married. Or is this something by the way ?"

Hamilton spoke cautiously, obviously thinking that he was dealing with a lunatic. " Why, er, we've been married nearly three years, you know that. Dammit, I told you not twenty minutes ago how our baby picked up an Asian disease before we could get her immunised. What's this all about ?"

" No Elinore," muttered Sloan to himself. " No Elinore for me." He knew what had happened now.

He stepped up to the transverse accelerator and scanned the instrument board of half-a-hundred meters as if it were a poem in which every dial was a word, every grouping a line. He had neglected one factor when he built his equipment. He was dealing in dimensions, and for this reason the spatial relationships of the components was important.

As it was he had neglected the geometrical aspect, and instead of the transverse forces acting on the platinum pan, they had been cast into the field which the machine created round itself, and in which both Hamilton and Elinore had been placed when he renewed the faulty component. They had received the tensions which had been built up in order to make the oblique thrust through time.

Consequently Hamilton and the corpse of Elinore had vanished. And in their places were . . . Hamilton and Elinore.

Now the enigma was solved : he knew what happened when a large mass was made to pass at right angles to time . There was a reaction, and it was replaced by a similar mass from its point of destination.

In spite of everything he thrilled when he saw the significance of this. Was the conjecture of centuries, and his own Theory of Plural Appearances, correct ? Were there endless duplications of himself, of Elinore, of everybody ?

The young girl who stood before him, in nearly every respect his Elinore, was from another world, from a parallel existence. In that world a Professor Sloan who had not made the mistake of allowing his apparatus to get out of control was staring in stunned uncomprehension at a corpse.

In that world Elinore was not his wife. Did the Sloan of that existence love her, he wondered ? He could hardly envisage a Curt Sloan who was not in love with Elinore.

There were other aspects to the new knowledge, to which his imagination was drawn by an irresistible but repugnant fascination. In the endless repetitions, Elinore must play many parts . . . Elinore the unfaithful wife, Elinore the whore . . . yet each one of them Elinore. He shuddered. This was not how he wanted things to be !

These thoughts made him burn with impotent jealousy, and when he looked up and saw her and her husband watching his silent contemplations, it flamed up in him like Hellfire. He decided that he could accept this misfortune. Already he was scheming how to retrieve Elinore for himself.

As a first move he gave them an explanation, describing what he believed to have happened as simply as possible. He was relieved to see that they did not condemn him, but he also noted the tender look that Elinore gave Hamilton, and felt more alone than ever in his life.

" Very well," he continued, trying to keep his voice even, " I now propose to operate the particle accelerator again. This is not your world—so if you will kindly remain standing where you are . . ."

Hamilton frowned over his theory. " Very interesting, old man, but I don't care to be on the receiving end of it. If you can send us back where we belong, please do. But I think you should be careful."

Sloan ignored the reproof. Actually he had not been entirely frank, for he had censored the accident from his account, and neither did he intend to restore them to their original existence. He wanted Elinore, not the corpse which would be his lot if he kept his word, but a living Elinore identical to the one he had lost. Somewhere in the endless combinations of parallel time was the perfect duplicate.

Hamilton felt sorry for him as he made the arrangements for a second thrust through time. In the last half hour Sloan had become stooped, haggard, a pitiful creature driven by terrible internal despair. With a trembling hand he pressed the switch to complete the operation, and swivelled to look at Elinore.

At once he saw a perceptibly different woman. The cast of her features was the same, but she held her head more erect ; her eyes had a flashing quality, which before had been easy and gentle. Bitterness, and the beginnings of hatred rose in him, for as he looked at her he was certain of one thing : this woman would never have consented to become his wife.

" Well," he said sardonically, " may I know the name of your husband ?"

She stared. " What on Earth are you talking about ?"

"You heard me," he snarled ungraciously. "Your husband!"

She shrugged. " You know very well Peter Garrett is my husband and always has been."

" That toad !" Sloan ejaculated, disgusted beyond his expectation. " That creep who tried to ruin me ? Slandering my work, trying to make an outcast of me . . ."

She tossed her head with all the offended dignity which a woman is capable of mustering. " You've no right to insult my husband," she told him scornfully. " He never did those things : you're just over-sensitive. And now I think I'd better go home."

" Home ?" Sloan laughed maliciously. " You fool, there's no home for you here !" His muscles convulsed in rage, and he tensed as if to leap at her. A restraining hand fell on his arm.

" Take it easy, Curt. Nothing's worth that much bother."

Hamilton's big face regarded him with the concern of a brother. The jacket, the professor noticed, had reverted to blue.

" Leave me alone."

" Look, Curt, forget it. Can you make Elinore any happier now ?"

" So you know what's going on ?"

The other nodded. " Your counterpart worked it out pretty quick when you dumped the body on his floor. And he wasn't very happy about it."

" It's nothing to do with you."

Sloan was breathing heavily, and with alarming alacrity he reached over to a work-bench and picked up a large metal discharge-tube. " God help me, Hamilton, interfere in my affairs and I'll smash you with this !"

Hamilton walked away and sat down on the other side of the laboratory. " No man should do this," he muttered to himself. " He's insane with desire—he doesn't realise what he does."

Once again Sloan turned the calibrated knobs, and slapped the switch. This time he reached out to an immense distance to make an exchange with an existence millions, billions of repetitions removed, in the hope that far away in the misty vastness of transverse time was the object of his search. For a brief interval there was a supernatural flicker : then Elinore was running into his arms, soothing his nerves with her gentle hands.

The greeting was so affectionate that he had no questions, and all his anxiety disappeared. He ran his hands over her shoulders, appraising her surreptitiously. This one he would settle for. This one was his.

She satisfied the salient feature in his mind, though he did not fully realise it : possession. Madness ebbed from him as the cause of the trauma was balmed.

Then Hamilton strode forward angrily. " You moron, Sloan !" we began, but the professor waved him away. "Get out of my laboratory," he ordered. On an impulse he grabbed a discharge-tube and waded into the accelerator, smashing every component of the valuable apparatus. " This is the end of transverse physics ! I renounce my knowledge of it—now!"

And such is the will-power of such a man, that all matters appertaining to transverse particles passed out of his mind.

But Hamilton stormed at him, rage spurting from him like steam from a steam engine. " So smug and contented ! Don't you know what you've done today ? You have Elinore back , yes. But what about the poor devil who has nothing bu t

what . . . you had earlier this morning. He has the same feelings as yourself. He *is* yourself, down to the last detail."

The bitter peroration finally sobered Sloan. He sank to a stool, aghast. " What have I done ?" he said emptily. He had committed a hideous crime—against himself. Now he was worn, spent by the claim of a relentless passion, thinking that somewhere was a Professor Curt Sloan who was weeping with inexpressible grief.

He had learned how to cross time and be a woman-stealer at the expense of his other selves. He knew that he would spend many years contemplating that.

Elinore looked confused. " Curt," she said plaintively, " I don't understand."

Sunlight glittered on the broken accelerator. He put his arm round her and pressed her gently. " Don't worry," he soothed, " it's nothing of account. Don't worry." She obviously didn't know that there had been any change. He decided that she never would know.

No man receives perfect requital through selfishness. He had found both the reward, and the price of jealousy. He was glad to have her back. But never again did Professor Sloan feel jealousy over his wife.

P. F. Woods

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With England slipping slowly towards revolution since the compulsory introduction of Emotion Registers, Jimmy Solent finds that he is becoming more and more involved in affairs of both the heart and the State.

MINOR OPERATION

by BRIAN W. ALDISS

Part Two of Three Parts

Foreword

The heat waves of summer break over the shores of England, 1965. *At the same time, a wave of enlightenment engulfs the population. Jimmy Solent is caught in this tide in the affairs of men. For he already bears on his forehead an ER (or Norman Light, or nunchaser, as the inventions are popularly called)—and already his ER has led him into trouble.*

ERs, Emotion Registers, are silver discs the size of a penny which turn pink when their wearer feels emotional attraction for the opposite sex. They are being installed under the National Health Service, thanks to the initiative of Dr. Warwick Bunnian, the Minister of Health. After the beginning of September, it will be compulsory for everyone under sixty to wear a disc on his or her forehead. Naturally there is opposition to this, chief opponent being William ('Big Bill') Bourgoyne, M.P., for Sludge (East).

Jimmy Solent, one of the first to wear a disc, finds it brings him trouble at home and at work.

He lives in his brother Aubrey Solent's London flat, with Aubrey and Aubrey's fiancee, Alyson Youngfield, neither of whom wear ER's as yet. Jimmy's disc "pinks" at Alyson, but he finds himself involved with a girl of far more character, Rose English.

Jimmy meets Rose at a party where only he and she are wearing ER's. The party is held at BIL (British Industrial Liaisons), where Aubrey is an executive. Also present is another BIL type, Guy Leighton, who shows an interest in Rose, and Vincent Merrick, a high-powered psychiatrist. Jimmy and Rose leave the party and spend a glorious night together.

After that, however, Rose proves elusive. Guy warns Jimmy she is connected with Iral Chemicals and their subsidiaries, Norman Laboratories. Norman Laboraties invented the ER, and Rose is related to the Norman family. This information has little influence on Jimmy. While England slips towards revolution, Jimmy slips towards inertia. Little work is done at the IBA (the International Book Association, where Jimmy occupies a minor post). Even his friends at the IBA, Donald Hortense, the Librarian, and Mrs. Wolf, do little to lighten his darkness. Fortunately, Jimmy's quiet desperation is not disturbed by the smooth Director of the IBA, Conrad Scryban.

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Such hair as Conrad Scryban possessed began high on his head. This gave him a good sweep of brow. His nose was sensitive and waxy, his mouth firm. His eyes were brown. His face looked well tended. He had the bland air of an actor who has played butlers not wisely but too often.

"You see, he makes a proper little picture of a Managing Director," Jimmy had complained to Donald once. "It's just too good to be true. Those eyes are too gentle and sincere to be anything but the eyes of a charlatan."

"Why should you worry?" Donald had said. "You should expect directors of crazy joints like the IBA to look like that."

Perhaps the librarian was right, Jimmy thought, as he stood gazing at Conrad Scryban now. This Monday morning, the director wore green tweed and brogues; a shotgun would not have looked out of place under his arm; instead, he had a portfolio. Mrs. Wolf, whisking along beside him, gregarious

as a city-bred vulture, carried another portfolio. Jimmy carried his Haiti file. Donald Hortense made up the party of four ; he had his hands in his pockets, carrying nothing.

As they headed for the Main Exhibition room, down a corridor which even the chic black and grey wallpaper could do nothing to lighten, Scryban was talking to them about a little book of Maginn's published early the previous century. " The Maxims of Sir Morgan O'Doherty."

Perhaps he enjoyed talking about literature ; perhaps he hoped to pass on something to his subordinates. Whatever the reason, for a literary man in England to talk about literature was unusual enough to be remarked on.

" And now perhaps, Mrs. Wolf, you would kindly describe to us, mainly, possibly, for Jimmy's benefit, the sort of background effect we strive to create behind all our little displays here," Scryban said.

" With pleasure," said Mrs. Wolf, smiling at them as if she wanted to bite them. Fixing his eyes on those little teeth, Jimmy told himself he must listen carefully and forget that Rose would now be somewhere in London, perhaps within a mile of the IBA.

" Our basic premise is simple enough," said Mrs. Wolf. " Civilisation has now reached a plateau when literature may be taken for granted, much as we take constant hot water for granted. As a passing example, I may mention that the current U.N. slogan, ' The opposite of peace is not war but death,' was coined by an Englishman educated under the Education Act of '44. Like immersion heaters, books can now be safely left to do their work unseen.

" This platitude might have seemed revolutionary even a couple of years ago, when the world was unsettled and the Cold War had not blown cold enough to be, as now, completely frozen over and safe enough to skate on—oh yes, the Russians can afford a war in the Middle East even less than we. The book in the last decade, in the fifties, degenerated into a mere article, a poor man's TV."

She smiled at Jimmy searchingly ; he wondered if he should be taking notes : " Civiln. on platto. Hot water. Skate on. Poor m's TV."

" Now the book has graduated," Mrs. Wolf continued. " From being nothing more than a rather boring object, it has become an ideal—an aspiration, to use our founder's own word.

' Our concern,' as he told an intruding bookseller once, ' is not with sales but with souls.' The book's deplorable nadir as Cinderella of the entertainment world has been renounced ; from now on, it is a cult, something to be worshipped and even talked about, but preferably not read—as I say, a symbol, not a cathode-substitute.

" The book has disappeared, dissolved. In its place is an *atmosphere*, vibrant, alive, creative, receptive. Anything can come out of it, and it is up to us at the IBA to see that it does."

She finished on a grand, declamatory note which had scarcely died before Donald said, *sotto voce*, " In other words, the long night of enlightenment has dawned."

" Our librarian is cynical this morning," Conrad Scryban said pleasantly. " I think we may presume that he has had a poem accepted." Turning to Jimmy, he said, " Well, that should give you a general line of campaign to follow for your Haiti exhibition, I think. If you want any help at all, don't hesitate to ask Mrs. Wolf or me."

" Thank you," Jimmy said. " But I'm afraid I don't quite see how you can tie down those principles to what, after all, is going to be an exhibition of books. I mean, you've got to have *books*."

" Not exactly," Scryban said, frowning slightly and glancing at his heavy wrist watch. " After all, you have this portrait from Clunes to start with. Try and work along that sort of pictorial line. Some gay Haitian military uniforms, for instance —the V. and A. should have some if you give them a ring— would look attractive in the front bay. It should not be beyond you to hunt up some of the weapons of the period. But you must take care not to overload your display with books ; you'll find it only antagonises the public. We must always remember the public."

They watched him walk away. Donald linked arms with Mrs. Wolf and said, " Come on, kids, work's over for today. Let's take the hint and go and get some coffee."

" You carry on," Jimmy said. " I'll be with you. I've just got to make a phone call."

Hurrying into his little room, he picked up his phone, and dialled the Debroy Dalmar. When a plastic, crease-resistant voice replied, Jimmy asked to be put through to Rose's room.

He heard a buzz, and then a man's voice spoke. It said, regretfully, the Miss English was not in.

" Can you tell me where I can get hold of her, or where she works ?" Jimmy asked, instinctively disliking any stranger who could loll about in Rose's room when she was away.

" Perhaps I could convey a message. Would you give me your name and address ?"

" As I haven't got a message for her," Jimmy said, " that will hardly be necessary. I want to see her."

" Then I suggest you give me your name and phone number, and she can ring you and make an appointment."

" Don't be bloody obscurantist, old boy. Just tell me where she works. I'll do all the rest."

" That isn't possible at present," the voice at the other end said, quite unperturbed. " But if you'll give me your phone number I'll see what I can do in the matter."

Jimmy weakened and gave the stranger his name and phone number. He was too irritated to go back and join the others for coffee. Instead, he sat drumming his fingers on the desk and gazing at the IBA pamphlets on people like Svevo. No doubt about it, Rose was rather a challenge. When the phone rang, it made him jump.

" Solent," he said, grabbing the receiver.

" Jimmy ?"

" Hello, yes. Jimmy Solent here. IBA. Who's calling please ?" The voice was familiar, but . . .

" I understood you were calling me."

" My God ! Rangey—is that you, Rangey ?"

It was Rangey. There the simple miracle was : that wonderful woman was connected to him. By phone. The lounger in her hotel room had wasted little time in ringing through to her. Jimmy was flung into a pother.

" Oh look, Rangey, listen . . . hello, I mean, pet ! I . . . you . . . I didn't expect you to call so soon." In his excitement, Jimmy babbled. " Look, listen, sweet, it's been an absolute age since Thursday. I've thought about you so much all the time. Come out with me this evening. Come out to dinner or something : anything."

" It's sweet of you, Jimmy, but I'm terribly busy," the cheerful, self-contained voice said. " I can't make this evening; it's such short notice, isn't it ?"

" I came round on Friday, but you'd gone."

" Round where ? Here ?"

" To the Debroy."

" Oh. I see." And then a silence, in which Jimmy's heart sank a little. She sounded so devastatingly non-committal.

" I suppose I'd still be alive tomorrow night, said he with a note of forced gaiety," said Jimmy with a note of forced gaiety.

" Jimmy dear, I'm sorry, but I shan't be free this week, not on any evening. It's not an excuse ; I am simply terribly busy." He could not conceal from himself that no trace of regret was detectable in that level voice.

" I've got to see you, Rangey." He dropped all pretence now that this was not a matter of life and death. It ceased to matter whether the IBA switchboard operator was eavesdropping on the line. " I've got to see you, Rangey, really. Do you understad ? Have *lunch* with me. Anything. You've got to eat sometime. I've got to see you soon. Have lunch with me. Today. How about today ?"

After a moment she said, " I can't get away for lunch, but I suppose you could come up here. Could you ?"

" Today ? Of course. Where are you ?"

Rose gave him the name " Ghearing and Flower Ltd.," and an address in Deptford ; then she rang off. Jimmy sat limply, full of dread and hope. He was to meet her at twelve-thirty : it was still before eleven.

With satisfaction, he realised his Norman Light had turned a determined cerise at the very thought of her.

Until twelve o'clock, Jimmy made a pretence of studying Mackenzie's " Notes on Haiti," which Donald had procured for him. Then in a burst of agitation, he rang through to Donald.

" I've just remembered," he said, " that I should have prepared the Holmes room for the two o'clock talk by William Golding. It's gone clean out of my head, for some reason. Be an angel and push the chairs round and fill the carafe for Golding, will you ? I'm nipping out now and may not be back in time."

A moment later, Jimmy was in the street and heading for Holborn. There, the tube swallowed him with the crowd as effortlessly as a whale sucking down plankton. Only when he was in the train did he begin vaguely to wonder who Ghearing and Flower were and what Rose might be doing in Deptford. It was terrible to be faced with these major issues in this heat.

Deptford was hot. Nobody knew Settle Place, where Messrs. Ghearing and Flower lived and moved and had their glorious

being. At last, after walking hopefully for some distance, Jimmy found a man who said, " Yes, of course, Settle Place—I happen to live there, just my luck. Straight down here about 200 yards till you get to the Stag, turn left, then second right and it's on your right, past the Kia-Ora depot. You can't miss it. Ghearing's is a big white building."

It was already 12 : 25. Jimmy found himself running. The bare idea of being at Deptford at all was unlikely ; the whole situation seemed to him like a dream. He dared not even stop at the Stag for a bracer.

For a wonder, the instructions he had been given were correct and at 12 : 28 he debouched at a canter into Settle Place. Settle Place was black ; Ghearing and Flower's was a white place. Its entrance hall, from which several passages sprouted, was modern in an early fiftyish way, and needed cleaning. A stack of battleship-grey crates stood untidily by the enquiries counter. Jimmy gave his name to a receptionist and waited anxiously, rubbing his steaming face on his handkerchief and straightening his tie, certain that he looked unfit to be Rose's lover. His shirt was sticking to his chest ; he prised it gingerly off and blew into it from above the second button.

" What do you *do* here ?" he asked the receptionist, more abruptly than he had intended, when he saw her eyes on him.

"Sit and read when nobody's about. Why?" the receptionist said. She was a prim, pale weed of a woman ; Jimmy guessed that she was a widow far sunk into Methodism.

" No, I meant what does this firm do ?" he persisted.

" Oh . . . Pills. Synthetics. You know . . . chemicals and stuff." She turned away as if the effort of hospitality sickened her.

A messenger appeared and led Jimmy along several corridors into a courtyard. It was an immense place, almost endearingly unattractive. He was ushered through a door marked " No Admittance " and left there. Jimmy found himself in an enclosure much like a big greenhouse, encased in glass and with flags underfoot. Instead of flowers, small pens were ranged on either side of the walk ; in some of these pens were animals : rabbits, monkeys, cats, hamsters, pigs, guinea-pigs, a pair of foxes. A smell of disinfectant filled the green air. At the far end of the enclosure, there was Rose, talking to a man in a white smock. He left her almost as soon as Jimmy appeared.

Clutching a board to which a sheaf of paper was clipped, Rose walked down the flagstones towards him. He felt himself dissolving into his component molecules. She wore an ice-blue linen tailored dress, absolutely plain except for two bold pockets in the skirt. It was perfection on her, lifting her at once above the planes of good and evil to that sphere where works of art belong.

She was smiling as she approached, the long face slewing its jaw to one side in an odd gesture all its own. Jimmy knew that gesture as though she had been doing it to him for centuries. Her eyes were that turbulent mixture of green and brown : like the atmosphere of Jupiter, Jimmy thought, opaque and deadly. She had a confident way of walking ; the way you walk if your standards are the Debroy Dalmar standards. As she reached Jimmy, she popped the board and papers she was carrying into a holder above one of the pens ; he caught the words " Salivation Rate," on the top paper. Swallowing his own saliva, he tried to pull himself together.

" I don't have to ask which you are, the Ghearing or the Flower," he said, his voice rattling like a loose tonsil in his throat. " I just don't know whether you're a—no, not a rose, that's too obvious—a spike of Russell lupin—or a, yes, I think a cactus dahlia. They're my favourite flower."

" A hollyhock, cock," she said, succinctly dismissing the subject. She just stood there looking at him ; he had the uneasy feeling that she could smell he was sweating.

" I had to come, Rangey, Rose. It's so good to see you again. I hope it's not an inconvenience." That was an error : he had not meant to let one word of diffidence escape him ; it had better not be an inconvenience. " I meant what I said on the phone. I'm just consumed by you. You're like itching powder in the blood."

She was watching him with interest. Her forehead possessed two definite creases ; wrinkles ran joyously round her eyes. Yes, she must be at least thirty-five. She was not actually beautiful ; you might even say she was not beautiful at all—except that in another sense it was a downright lie. For her face held understanding and frankness, character ; it was a unique face.

" Perhaps it's just as well you've come," she said. " We'll go through to the canteen."

" I'm happy here, Rangey. Can't we stay here and talk ?"

" I've got to eat."

As he followed her, Jimmy asked what the animals were for. Not that he cared one naked curse.

" We teach them to cheat and deceive like humans," she said, without any noticeable inflection in her voice.

The people who passed them in the corridor stared hard at Jimmy ; one by one, they were momentarily bathed in his pink glow. Rose's Norman Light, he saw with sorrow, remained neutral. He had not even made it flicker. Yet still he hoped.

In the canteen, a forlorn place through which pop music whispered like a draught, Rose collected a spaghetti and egg and a chocolate mousse, loading them on to a tin tray. When she made for a table behind a beaver board partition, Jimmy followed, bearing coffee ; he had no stomach for food. The contrast between Rose and her surroundings was so great that he asked, " What do you *do* here, Rangey ?"

" This is one of my uncle's firms," she said. " Uncle Felix whom I think you met. Don't you like it ?"

" I've no idea," he said. Her question was so irrelevant ; her answer had not been notably satisfactory either. He watched her as she tackled the spaghetti ; she looked offensively healthy and composed. She was very clean. She had some freckles, a barely noticeable peppering.

" What did you want to tell me, Jimmy ?" she asked, after a silence, when her plate was half empty.

" What I tried to tell you over the phone. That I'm just full of you, that my flesh is drugged by you. That I didn't expect or deserve what I got on Thursday night, but that it has . . . bowled me over, dazzled me, been quite beyond any previous experience. It isn't easy to say—it isn't even very dignified—but it happens to be the truth. It was all . . . a wonderful revelation."

He paused, to let her say something. She was still tucking into the spaghetti, looking down at her plate. She said, " Go on, Jimmy."

" I've made myself clear so far, haven't I ?" he said tartly. She had just muffed her chance of saying how much Thursday had meant to her too.

" Yes, quite clear. You enjoyed yourself on Thursday. So did I, it was fun and it was beautiful. But it's over now. Thursday's not real any more. It was real at the time, but it's not now."

" You're wrong, Rose," he said in pain, forgetting to call her Rangey. " It wasn't real then maybe, just a glorious fantasy ; but ever since, it has been real—more real than reality. I've got to . . . I want so badly to see more of you, to show you . . . oh, to show you how you suddenly opened up an entirely new world in me."

" You're like so many people, you want to live in the past," she said. She looked absolutely calm. " It doesn't work . . ."

" The past ! Four days ago !" he exploded.

" I'm sorry, Jimmy, but Thursday is as irrecoverable as 1066. Anyhow, I don't intend to get emotionally involved with you."

He choked on that. Up until that very moment, although he perceived that his reception left much to be desired (perhaps because Rose was ill-at-ease in these functional surroundings, had been the thought in his mind), Jimmy had looked on Thursday only as a golden prelude to a great drama of sensual and mystical awakening. Worse, he had, in his futile innocence never realised that it could be regarded otherwise. His feelings —that ice-hot nimbus enveloping him—had been quite involuntary ; to learn that Rose's were absolutely under control cut him clean through his soft centre.

Jimmy sat there staring at her as she chased a last worm round her plate. He fought off the frost working inwards from his extremities. As she put her knife and fork together on an empty plate, he said painfully, " You gave me so much. I'd hoped I gave you something in return. It's hard for me to say this, but you—you were so *eager* that night."

" You didn't give me a thing," she said. Of the whole conversation, they were almost her only words which remained with Jimmy afterwards. They would remain for years, cruel and undeniable, as a fish thrown back into a lake must always carry the stab of the hook.

He could find nothing to say, and it was Rose who spoke next. She stopped spooning in mousse to look him in the eye and say it.

" If you are honest with yourself, you'll see that Thursday was complete in itself. It was fun and it was beautiful "—again that easy phrase—" but you spoil things by pursuing it. It was just an accident that happened. Why not be grateful and leave it at that ?"

" But by itself, Thursday was sordid and stupid," Jimmy contradicted desperately. " Only by developing it can you give it beauty or meaning."

" In other words, you are persisting because you want to *justify* what we did, because you can't see it is its own justification," she said as levelly as a judge. " I'm afraid I've very little patience with that type of sentimentality."

No doubt could remain any longer in Jimmy's mind that they were two people completely, irreconcilably, at odds, that though Rose revealed no antagonism, Jimmy distinctly felt it. It flared up at once, as if it had always been there. He had made a mistake and had been snubbed for it, thoroughly. The contrast between her present self, ice-cold in the ice-blue, and the generous goddess he had glimpsed on Thursday, was beyond his powers of understanding.

Jimmy found himself talking in a low, guttural voice as if delivering a malediction. " I'll tell you why I came here and made such a fool of myself in front of you. I'd made a discovery. I thought perhaps I was the first person ever to make it—goodness knows why. You see, I discovered, when I was with you, that every woman is physically different, as well as mentally different ; physically different, I mean, in their most intimate and exquisite details. It—I can't explain —it has altered all my idea of love. I don't pretend I've had much experience of women, and you probably find me callow, and unsatisfactory, but you—your details, Rose, they seemed so very beautiful in their own right, like a fruit, which was never a way I'd bargained to feel before. And what I thought was that to have something really fine like that, you'd have to be fine all through ; I imagined—oh, it was silly—that I could read your character, your whole being, right through, by the senses. Ever since Thursday, you see, I've never ceased to be intimate with you. Now you're showing me you're a stranger and I dreamed it all."

She fitted a cigarette into a holder and lit it from a cylindrical lighter Jimmy had seen her use at the Clunes' party.

" It is an interesting theory," she said.

She was being sarcastic, Jimmy thought, or perhaps she was utterly bored and trying to be polite ; or perhaps—no, he could not guess. Her remark was as inscrutable and as dead for him as the Rosetta Stone. It was impossible to realise that this woman sitting in this dreadful canteen could possess any of the

magical qualities with which he had endowed her. Even, that she was capable of feeling. She was less than a stranger : she was an enemy. Jimmy stared at her in hatred, and at that same instant still had to restrain himself from beseeching her to lie with him once more. He shook with loathing for all she or he had done or said, for every beastly mistaken thing that he had ever imagined had existed between them.

He stood up.

" I must go," he said.

Rose also stood, as a man might have done. When she looked into his eyes, Jimmy was again baffled ; something of her expression, either in the translucent world of her pupils or in the set of her face, offered him courage. It was as if she silently said, " Life is hell, brother ; that's a knowledge we both share," but Jimmy was too inexperienced to know that looks convey unmistakably what language cannot.

" Did you come by car ?" she asked.

Did you come by car . . . Ye Gods ! The bitch was mad.

" Goodbye," he said.

seven

For Jimmy Solent, the succeeding weeks were empty of happiness. For the majority of the population of Britain, however, the time was a happy one or, if not happy, full of that exhilarating tension which makes an adequate substitute for happiness. Something was always happening or about to happen, for a new perspective had come along to alter their vision of their lives.

The weather, although uncertain at Old Trafford, stayed fine generally, and everyone got outdoors whenever possible, achieving their usual splendid massed effects along the beaches of the South Coast and in the parks of cities. This year, however, an additional zest filled the throngs, a zest born of novelty. The national hobby became NL-spotting : getting out to see who was " pinking " (as the new phrase had it) at whom. In the process, one was quite likely to pink oneself. The nine miles of illumination at Blackpool were at times eclipsed by the general rubefaction below them.

Many trades boomed. Hot Dog and ice cream men alike did unprecedented business—particularly Ingolsby's, the ice cream firm which called an ordinary strawberry ice " Genecream "

and sold it in wrappers bearing the exhortation " Cool down those overworked genes !" Outdoor candid cameramen were heavily overworked, and a representative of Kodak stated "This year colour photography has really arrived ; black-and-white is as dead as the Twist." Everyone wanted a snap of " Him glowing at me," or " Me glowing at her." In the amusement arcades, Test Your Glow machines became as prevalent as Test Your strength machines.

The only people who suffered a financial setback were the manufacturers of those hats and buttons which bear curious legends such as " I'm willing—Are you ?" and " Come and Get Me." Emotion Registers were capable of saying the same things more elegantly, more eloquently.

Yet even when the flood of complacency was at its height, an undertone of dissent was felt in both high and low places. Trouble brewed in the Welfare vat, but its symptoms as yet were elusive, affording everyone ample chance of ignoring them. An extra strike or two, an increased suicide rate, an attempted mutiny at Aldershot, a vast trade deficit—they had no integral meaning. The tide was coming in, but nobody bothered to move his deckchair.

England was full of overseas visitors, and England liked it. The visitors were not only tourists, but scientific and semi-scientific bodies or their representatives, investigating the brash new world of ER : sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, documentary film-makers from countries as far apart as the Argentine and Japan, philosophers from India, two female sexologists from West Berlin.

One evening in the second week of August, Jimmy was sitting reading the new Alan Sillitoe, when Aubrey came in. Aubrey nodded, half-smiled, and walked into his bedroom without speaking. This behaviour was so unusual in his punctilious brother, that Jimmy instantly knew something had happened ; having a bad conscience these days, he sat motionless by the window, feeling his stomach turn over and chanting to himself as a sort of protective measure, " Your sins will find you out ! That's just the worst of sin : if they don't find you out, her husband finds you in !"

Within a few minutes, Aubrey reappeared, having changed his suit for a pair of cavalry twill trousers and a cream Tricel shirt. It was ten past seven.

" Let's have the looney's lantern on for the news," he said, making his term for TV sound like the frosty little condescension to joviality it was.

" You've a ministerial air about you," Jimmy said. " Is anything wrong ?"

" I don't know, Jimmy. Nobody seems to think anything's wrong but me—and I'm the one who should think everything's right."

" Are you being a bit dramatic, Aubrey ?" Jimmy asked ; these Organisation Men loved the chance of an emotional fling-about in their free hours. Aubrey indeed sounded and looked odd. His customary restraint had vanished ; he stood in the middle of the Kosset carpet like Hamlet on the battlements at Elsinore.

" I think these Norman Lights are worth being dramatic about," he said, " but nobody else bar cranks and Bourgoynists seems to think so. They spell the end of freedom as we know it."

" Oh," Jimmy said, at once relieved and disappointed. His brother's attitude to ER's had been hardening of late, and they had already had several none too amicable discussions on the subject. Aubrey was one of the now dwindling minority who had still to get their ER's installed ; as little more than a fortnight remained in which to obtain the discs before the imprisonment law came into force, tension in this undecided minority was growing.

" It's so surprising you take the attitude you do, Aubrey," Jimmy said ; he put on a prim tone, in an attempt to compete with his brother's. "Opinion in the country is crystalising now. You can begin to see that the grumbles about the ER come chiefly from the cultural-academic camp, whereas *your* camp, the sort of scientific-administrative camp, is decidedly *pro* the new order."

•

Aubrey brushed this aside with less than his usual courtesy.

" I know that's so," he agreed ; " I also read that article in *The New Statesman*. Far more than you, I have been made to feel the party line. I just for once cannot conform. Partly, it's a religious objection to ER's and all they stand for . . ."

" Even when the good old Archbish himself declares they will eventually promote Christian frankness and chastity all round ?"

" Even then. You only care what the Archbishop says when it suits you. But my deepest objection is a humane one : it is a gross indignity to be forced to wear these things, a violation of the human spirit."

" They're big words !" Jimmy said facetiously ; he felt sick ; he wanted to roll on the floor and possibly do hand-springs into his bedroom, just to show his brother how very little he cared for these leader writer's phrases.

He turned away to the television set, staring down at it with hands in pockets until the news came on.

The new lady announcer, Tanky Craig, smiled winningly into the room and said, " The Swiss Government has just announced that, following the favourable report received from its research team which visited Great Britain last month, it has decided to install Emotion Registers on all the nation's adult population. British firms will handle the contract for the installation, estimated to be worth some eighteen million pounds. The first delivery of discs will probably commence in the middle of October.

" A spokesman in Berne today said ' We have reached the same conclusion as the British Government : that by giving our emotional life an, as it were, official standing, we shall shed light into many dark corners and eliminate most of the undesirable inhibitions and neuroses to which civilization has hitherto fallen prey.' You are now watching the scene outside the government buildings before the announcement was made . . ."

" Good Lord ! Is that what you're feeling depressed about ?!" Jimmy exclaimed, coming over to peer offensively into his brother's face with the intensity of a short-sighted anthropologist. " I should have thought it was the best news so far ! Good for the Swiss ! After all, in spite of a pile of favourable but slightly dazed comment abroad, we have been dangerously near becoming the laughing-stock of the world. Now we're vindicated—or at least our madness is not unique. Crikey, the British were always faintly funny, even in the good old days of Imperialism, but nobody ever laughs at the Swiss !" He crossed to the divider unit, pulling open the cellarette flap. " Weep no more, brother. Drink, and forget your message for the world. This calls for a Martini."

Aubrey accepted the drink warily. The soupily sagacious expression returned ; he looked like Joshua Reynolds sitting for a portrait by Gainsborough.

" Your reception of the news is going to be typical of the way the whole country will take it, I expect," he said. " Interesting! I can't wholly blame you, but don't you see we're going to end up with the whole *world* wearing these piddling devices ?"

" Prosit ! What's so bad in that, Aubrey ? Everyone in the world has navels, but who cares ? In five years, ER's will be as natural as navels."

" That's what I'm dreading," Aubrey said.

" Well, it isn't a rational dread."

In cool silence, they drank their warm martinis. Jimmy let his eye wander back to the yellow cover of " The Rough Kind." It was a distinct relief to him when Alyson appeared, just as he was feeling as claustrophobicly embedded in time as a fossil in slate.

" Can't stop, pet," she said, kissing Aubrey ; she wore a pert little hat and her brow was still innocent of the silver disc. " I'm just going to see Blanche, but I thought I'd pop in on my way and remind you about tomorrow afternoon. A date with Hampton Court, remember ?"

" I was going to come round and see you later," Aubrey said, standing with his hands clasped behind his back. " I'm sorry about this, darling, but I shan't be able to make it tomorrow afternoon. There is a spot of overtime I must do ; you know what the BIL is for keeping noses to grindstones. My time is going to be fully occupied for the next three weeks, I'm afraid."

She paused, looked hard at him and said frigidly, " I thought you had finished with that sort of thing now that the K. R. Shalu deal was tied up."

" That was chicken feed to this new project, Alyson," he told her. " This is really important." He explained to her about the Swiss decision to adopt the ER and added, " That Swiss contract goes to Iral and its affiliate companies—Norman Laboratories and all the others. BIL is handling all the administrative side of the affair for them, and backing them up to the hilt to get the deal through on time. It's going to mean a lot of work and organisation for everyone, as you can imagine. I heard about it from Sir Richard as soon as I arrived this morning ; he got the tip from the Ministry late last night." Aubrey paused for dramatic effect, then added, " Everything's in ferment. Sir Richard is transferring me from the Asian branch to the European branch. It's a considerable step up for me—or it will be, by the time we've cleared Switzerland."

They both congratulated him warmly. Why, Jimmy wondered, had he created all that unctuous fuss ? Could it have been because the unexpected promotion had suddenly made him unsure of himself ? Jimmy got the martini bottle and a glass for Alyson and poured them all a tot.

" The new era !" he said, raising his glass, and like a sudden twinge of toothache came the thought " I last used that phrase beside Hurn's swimming pool at Walton !" Conquering a wave of nostalgia, Jimmy added aloud, " All the time you were giving me the old trot about Norman Lights being a bad show you had this up your sleeve ! You ungrateful dog, Aubrey. I bet they'll double your salaray. Now I can see why you looked so odd when you came in : you were worrying over whether I'd accept the MG when you bought a Daimler."

" More ambitious than that even," Aubrey said, a professional smoothness entering his tone. " I was even hoping I might be able to afford to get married."

Dodging the implications of that, Alyson said, " Anything, in fact, rather than take me to Hampton Court tomorrow."

She moved restlessly over to the window. As her profile glistened past him, topped by a tiny flat hat whose ribbons lay along her fair hair, Jimmy thought she looked thinner, slightly tired. With a catch at his heart, he recalled a line of Pound's from a poem he had admired in his undergraduate days : "The August has worn against her." It might, as he had glibly, gladly claimed, be a new era ; but on the permanent stage the Unlovable Young People were growing to be old actors ; nobody plays juvenile leads forever.

A moment of sadness settled over all of them. Even between the well-intentioned, irreconcilable differences constantly show themselves. To break the mood, Aubrey said, " A London girl and she's never been to Hampton Court !" as if he were reading the line.

" The maze would be heavenly at this time of the year," Jimmy said. " Chock full of Coca-cola bottles and ice cream wrappers. I tell you, kids, don't miss it !"

" You'll have to take Alyson instead, Jimmy," Aubrey said. " I hate to disappoint her, and you never go anywhere these days. It'll do you both good."

" I can't, Aubrey," Jimmy said, looking embarrassed. " It's nothing to do with me. I can't take her."

" Of course you can. Why not ?"

" That's a stupid question, coming from BIL's brightest," Jimmy said agitatedly, lighting a cigarette. " I'm at a disadvantage here ; sometimes I think you deliberately go out of your way to put other people in a difficult position. For heaven's sake, Aubrey, you aren't blind. You can see that every time Alyson comes past me I start pinking."

He would not look at them, but it was relief to have the truth out at last.

" I understand from the handouts that that means you have a sub-threshold attraction for her," Aubrey said coldly.

" You know jolly well that's what it means. And not so sub, either."

" Very well," Aubrey said, standing rather stiffly. " Why should the knowledge affect me ? Yours seems to me the only possible reaction to Alyson's presence, bless her. You still have control of yourself, haven't you ? Your moral faculties still function, I trust ? You can take her on the river to Hampton Court without throwing your arms round her, can't you ? You're not a slave to that thing on your forehead, are you ?"

" Stop talking about me as if I'm not here," Alyson said. " I refuse to listen to any more of this silly, meaningless bickering ! You're two horrible grumpy brothers, and I insist you fight a duel with loaded ice cubes."

" There's where the greatest danger of these things lies," Aubrey said, turning to her although ignoring her remark. " People are already beginning to think of ER's as ' Go ' signals ; they're not ; they're ' Caution ' signals. Not that I worry. I'm going to live abroad when I've made my pile."

" Switzerland, sweet ?" Alyson asked. She said it lightly enough, but she looked annoyed with both of them.

On the river next afternoon, however, Alyson was her usual equable self. She was admirably clothed in a dramatic cotton dress with standaway skirt and buccaneer cuffs ; her blouse was a mingling of the colours the fashion designers would probably speak of as sherry and anthracite, softening away to cream towards the hem of her skirt. She wore cream-rimmed sunglasses. Her tired look had gone and the moist, dewy one was back. " On trust, boy," Jimmy growled to himself, remembering, Aubrey's stubborn belief in him.

" You look wonderful," Jimmy said. " Forgive me if I pink —my genes know a good thing when they see it."

" I don't trust you even if Aubrey does," Alyson smiled, " so just behave yourself."

But pinking was in the fashion that bright afternoon. Everyone on the pleasure boat seemed to be at it as they sailed up the Thames. Ninety per cent of the population now wore ER's. To the middle-aged, they had proved an undisguised blessing ; thousands of people beginning to be regarded as " past-it-all " by acquaintances were now able to show, effortlessly, that the fires of life still burned.

Alyson and Jimmy meandered through the famous Hampton Court maze, which was happily bottle-free, and took tea afterwards in an open-air cafe, where a canned orchestra played Suppe and Strauss. They were each demolishing an excellent meringue when Jimmy looked up to see Guy Leighton approaching. " *Quelle* disappointment ! Every ointment owns its fly ; this one's called Guy," Jimmy groaned to himself, and rose smiling manfully to make the introductions.

" This is Aubrey's fiancee, Miss Alyson Youngfield. Alyson, this is Guy Leighton, a kingpin in the BIL pin cushion."

Guy, in his turn; introduced the two people with him. One of them Jimmy had met at Sir Richard Clunes' party the previous month : Vincent Merrick, industrial psychiatrist. The woman with him, wearing heavy glasses much like his, but otherwise no more similar to him than Pavlov to Pavlova, was Mrs. Merrick.

" I'm glad to see you've had your ER installed since we met last, Guy," Jimmy observed. " I thought you were making a stand against them ? Infringement of personal dignity and all that, eh ?" Merrick was also equipped ; Mrs. Merrick, in this respect, still presented a virgin brow.

" We're trying to keep off that subject, Solent," Guy replied, standing on tiptoes in an attempt at amiability. " Nevertheless, we've been on it most of the afternoon. Yes, I've got mine at last ; the implacable pressures of society proved too much for me. To conform is comfort."

" These ER's will not bring conformity," Merrick said, seating himself next to Alyson without looking at his wife. " Everyone seems to regard them as a badge of uniformity ; that is just what they are not. We are in for a wave of individuality. That's what I predict, anyhow. Inhibitory blocks we've come unjustifiably to regard as keystones in our society are being swept away. You should see some of the executives who have consulted me in this month ! It would stagger you. Kraft-Ebbing, thou shouldst be living at this hour. Without

divulging any names or betraying any professional confidences, I can tell you I've unearthed two gerontophiles, a hermaphrodite, three wonderful autoerotics whose lights never go out, and a fellow who pinks at Drambuie for reasons I've yet to unearth—all within the last week."

" They sound rather extreme cases," Jimmy said.

" Oh, admittedly," Merrick agreed, wiping his glasses on a bright silk handkerchief. " But what I'm getting at is this. Ever since the second world war, our society has suffered increasingly from the desire to give up : in a word, defeatism. All over the world, we have been politely backing out—to submerge ourselves in the cozy, spineless gloom of the Welfare State."

" Oh, now wait a minute . . ." Guy interrupted.

" No, you can't deny it," Merrick said. " From markets and colonies we've been busily opting out. The world is too much with us, late and soon, and ' Couldn't Care Less ' has become our watchword—coupled, of course, with ' Couldn't View More ' from the avant garde of abdicators who hide their heads in Mummy Telly. Now why is all this ? Surely if there is any one cause, it is simply that personal values have been lost. This terrible lust for anonymity is due solely to a profound distrust of individual worth. As a nation, we have been so heckled at from right, left and centre that we no long realise that a man with faults is worth ten dummies without any attributes at all."

" But the Registers don't instil attributes," Alyson said. She had been watching the psychiatrist with the greatest interest.

" They don't instil attributes, no," he agreed, " but they manifest them. At least, they manifest the most vital attribute of all : sex. Men and women—and in many cases I assure you this has come as a revelation to them—are suddenly assured by the presence of these little discs that they are not mere cogs in a Heath Robinson machine, but live creatures with desires and impulses of their own. If those impulses seem at times beyond their control, so much the more exciting for them. It's an absolute shot in the arm all round, I can tell you. That it has flushed a brood of perverts is only—from my professional point of view—a beginning, a small beginning."

He beamed with interest at them, added a " Let's have some ice cream," and waved commandingly to a waitress.

" And Vincent says the homosexuality laws are bound to be changed," Mrs. Merrick said, speaking almost for the first time.

" Of course they are," Merrick said. " Enlightenment's here at last, like it or not ! Human nature's been hounded out into the open and the government must face the consequences. You'll have heard, I suppose, about the trouble the public schools are having ? And then, looking further into the future, the marriage laws will have to be drastically revised. ' Until death do us part ' is all very well in its way, but gene-instinct laughs at the idea—absolutely laughs. I tell you, by the first year of the next century the world will be unrecognisable."

" The world or just England ?" Alyson asked.

" The world," Guy interposed, before Merrick could reply. " The Swiss move is out now. Everyone knows about it. Well, there's more to come. It's all hush hush, of course, but I've heard that Belgium's the next on the list. They'll buy the Registers—you mark my words. Their delegation was over here before the Swiss one, if you recall—I spoke to one of their members myself, very capable man. And that's the way the cat'll jump. No, tomorrow's an ER world, make no mistake. Everyone will follow our lead."

He rubbed his small, sallow hands, smiled gleefully, and accepted an ice cream. Jimmy wondered why his flesh suddenly felt cold ; there were no clouds over the sun ; the sensation must have been a reaction against the insane confidence of these two men. Before hubris, the wise shiver.

" We're driving into the country to a pub I know for a drink and a snack," Merrick said. " Why don't you two come along? I can drop you home afterwards. We should all be delighted if you would join our party."

It was nothing Jimmy was keen to do. He weakened and waffled and passed the decision to Alyson, consenting when she did. She seemed genuinely delighted by Merrick's invitation.

" That'll be splendid, Jasmine, won't it ?" Merrick boomed enthusiastically, turning almost for the first time to his dowdy little wife.

" Lovely," she agreed. As she spoke to Merrick, his light pinked vigorously back at her. The world, Jimmy reflected gra tefully, was packed with surprises.

eight

As the party came into a low lounge whose naked brick and beam were peppered with horse brasses and instruments of torture, Alyson squeezed Jimmy's hand. She removed the cream sunglasses, smiled at him and whispered, " This is fun ! Isn't Vincent Merrick wonderful ?"

" I think 'impossible' is the word you're looking for," Jimmy replied, but he was delighted to see she was enjoying herself. She sat on something like a church pew arranging the ample russet, black and cream of her skirt, while Jimmy sat on one side of her and the Merricks ranged themselves on the other.

" I always think this is such a nice inn, a real old country pub," Jasmine said, looking about with evident favour. "And Stipend itself is a nice little village. We used to come here a lot in the old days. The Minister of Health has his country place a mile up the road, isn't that so, Vincent ?"

She had a tremulous voice which made her husband sound like a bloodhound when he spoke.

" Bunnian ? Yes ; his is the big Georgian house beyond the village," Merrick added, looking at Jimmy, " I've played golf with him for a number of years."

" I shouldn't have taken you for a golfing man," Jimmy said.

" I'm not, but Jasmine likes it," Merrick said, without elaboration. It might also, Jimmy considered, have been Jasmine's idea to visit Hampton Court ; that hardly seemed the sort of place Merrick would frequent—or had he a professional affection for the maze ? Did it remind him of the tangled topiary of the ego ? Certainly he had come away from it quickly enough, gunning his car as if it had been a phallic symbol rather than a lemon yellow 1963 Mercedes.

" There will be little time for golf now, as far as I'm concerned," he said, addressing himself to Alyson as the drinks arrived, Guy supervising a man with a tray. " We must expect a wave of maladjustment throughout all ranks of society until the new order establishes itself. The general public are momentarily wallowing in mass exhibitionism ; they may be relied upon to cure themselves ; more sensitive spirits, the introvert element, need assistance. We may, indeed, find ourselves faced with an entirely new psychosis, induced by a reluctance to admit that other people's fantasies are as powerful as one's own. I have for instance, a very delightful actress of

forty with a distinct dread of seeing an ER pink. Acute neophobia is only a partial answer. Very interesting . . ."

" I read an article in *Home P-A* last week," Alyson said, " which claimed that the greatest proportion of unrest came from those sectors of the middle class which had subscribed most faithfully to the theory that no nice person *had* a sex life at all."

" That is approximately true," Merrick said, barking briefly with laughter, " merely because that particular stratum, owing to the repressiveness of the terms under which it elects to live, has always been a fertile source of rebellion. Now it's producing Bourgoynists and victims of vaginismus instead of writers, actors and explorers. One could possibly extrapolate from that and predict an end of all creative activity within five to ten years, except that by then the disquiet should be over. That's when we can expect the richest rewards—say a decade from now. We may, I think, at last look forward to a perfectly adjusted society ; I, of course, shall be out of a job—and creative activity may be nipped in the bud that way : the adjusted, after all, need no catharsis, and all art is catharsis. Yet, on the other hand, the healthy *dynamic* person is always in conflict with himself—oh, I know that sounds like heresy, coming from me—but if you remove the conflict, where are you ?"

" There's a spot of conflict going on outside the inn," Guy said to Jimmy. They turned and looked out of the window while Merrick continued his monologue to the two ladies.

On the opposite side of the road to the pub, a steep slope rose to a height of about fifty feet. A piggery or a ruinous farm, perched at the top of this slope, had formed a detritus of old cans, rusting corrugated iron, and motor tyres below it. Among these obstacles stood a dozen people, bearing hand-printed cardboard signs saying HANDS OFF SEX and LOVE AND SCIENCE WON'T MIX. These were evidently members of the Bourgoyne Group, or, as it now called itself officially since its amalgamation with the Suppression of Science Society, the Group for the Restoration of Emotional Privacy—GREP for short.

The dozen representatives of the Stipend branch of GREP were ill-assorted. Five of them were maiden-looking ladies of parched aspect ; one was a motherly type expecting to mother again within the next few days ; one looked like a traveller in

gents' suitings and had brought his father with him ; and the other four were yokels ranging in age from sixteen to forty.

" Very interesting, Solent," Guy said. " You notice what a madly mixed bag they are. As Bourgoyne claims, he draws his supporters from all sections of society, and what a curse it must be to all concerned ! Just imagine those poor old dears, who so obviously are playing hookey from the vicar's sewing circle to come here, taking tea with yonder yobs. God, I can see it all! The sucking noises! The agonised looks! The pained discussions of what they don't want discussed . . ."

" I've heard that the farm labourer as a class is more against ER than anyone," Jimmy said. " A pleasingly curious finding. The innate conservatism of the soil making its last stand . . . The inability to change in all around I see."

He watched the group outside with interest. It was being jeered at by a cluster of village lads, one or two with their girl friends, who stood outside the pub. One of the GREP labourers was red in the face and shouting back at them ; the women had drawn themselves up stoically and stared indifferently ahead.

" You don't still believe the government will fall by September 1, Guy, do you ?" Jimmy asked. " I don't imagine this sort of motley gathering is going to impress anyone. And Bourgoyne represents about all the organized opposition there is."

" Oh, as you say, though I see that the Army is getting restive. At the same time, there are bigger straws in the wind. We hear about them at BIL when others don't. You'd better keep this tidbit under your hat *pro tem*, but you know, I suppose, how the PM stands to gain personally out of the ER *putsch* ?"

" Gascadder ? No, I'm afraid I don't."

" Your brother is tighter than a clam, Solent. He ought to educate you politically . . . The inner story behind the whole ER deal is most frightfully instructive. To begin with, certain pressure was applied in the right quarters and certain shares changed hands. You realise, to diverge for a second, that the actual construction and functioning of the Lights themselves is top Top Secret ? There are supposed to be only three people in the country who fully comprehend how the things work. Each ER is assembled from separate parts made by various of Iral's companies. An electrode which penetrates or touches the brain is rumoured to come from the parent laboratory. Norman's.

An entirely new hypalgesic which alone makes the operation possible is produced at Ghearing and Flower's, another Iral off-shoot. Did you say something, Solent ?"

" I just said I knew Ghearing's," Jimmy gulped. An ice-blue menace walked towards him again over the flags, and an ice-blue voice said, " You didn't give me a thing." " Let me get our glasses filled up again, Guy," he said, staggering to his feet.

The glasses were duly refilled, and they forgot the demonstration outside. Merrick still talked with the ladies, though now in a lighter vein ; at the bar, a man in a beret slapped the back of another man in a beret and said, " Well, cheery-bye, Eric old sport, I've got to be thighborn by twenty-thirty hours." And Guy was speaking again, while Jimmy listened with a sort of soggy detachment.

". . . so the Min. of Health, our friend Warwick Bunnian —Vincent's golfing buddy !—gets his palm greased with Ghearing and Flower stock, while Gascadder is eased into Norman's. Thus armed, they tackle the BMA who, after their four years' struggle over doctors' salaries, weaken and give in, and agree to go ahead with the whole production. Next thing you know, in the name of sanity and a golden future, we—you and I, Solent, none other—are lining these altruistic laddies' pockets. That's how it's done behind the scenes, I tell you, every time. There's no question of any enlightenment being involved at any stage—just plain, ordinary self-interest. And if the knowledge gets into the wrong hands, up goes the balloon."

" I see," Jimmy said, thinking how inadequate it sounded. He wondered, appalled, if he was destined to spend all the rest of the evening imbibing Guy's noxious brand of enlightenment; cautiously, he edged himself back to the rest of the group.

Merrick was saying, ". . . so I am meeting revolution with revolution. The course of treatment I have evolved represents a fresh beginning to the history of alienism. My new clinic is an attempt to orient patients into the mystique of each other's neuroses. I'm expecting it to induce temporary tolerance patterns . . ."

A stone, shattering the lounge window, struck Merrick on his temple. With a roar of anguish, he jumped up, spilling his

beer over the carpet. Amid shouts outside, a car hooter sounded and there was a loud crash. Scudding footsteps and shouts echoed in the road. With one accord, the occupants of the pub rushed to the windows to see what was going on.

" That's Warwick Bunnian getting out of the car !" Guy exclaimed, standing on tiptoe excitedly.

" The poor fellow's been attacked," Merrick exclaimed, allowing Jasmine to examine his temple.

The car from which the stocky minister emerged had stopped in the middle of the road directly outside the pub. The GREP (Stipend Branch) had just struck their blow for emotional privacy. Its reason for standing awkwardly on the slope now became apparent. When Bunnian approached, being driven home in his car, the group had released a ten gallon oil drum full of rainwater, and the drum, with accidentally good timing, had careened down the slope and struck Bunnian's car squarely just behind its offside front wheels. The mixed collection of labourers and ladies was now scrambling up the slope, led by the traveller in gents' suiting ; nobody pursued them yet. As a picturesque touch, they had left their slogans behind to face the ministerial wrath.

" Guerilla warfare !" Mrs. Merrick exclaimed. " Oh what fun ! Warwick's chauffeur will be furious !"

" There'll be tumbrils down these quiet roads before we're done !" Merrick said, emitting another of his barking laughs. The stone had not even broken his skin. Dr. Bunnian was equally calm ; leaving his chauffeur to cope with the damage as best he might, he pushed his way through a gathering crowd and came into the pub.

" That was a narrow shave, sir," Guy said, materialising at once at the minister's elbow. " Do please allow me to buy you a drink ; the proletariat were behaving with grave thoughtlessness."

" That's very civil of you," Bunnian said, nodding over to Merrick in friendly fashion, " But perhaps you'll allow me to buy you one—and your friends, of course. How do ,Vincent ! Evening, Jasmine ! I've just come from the PM, as it happens, and he has been informed that Belgium has placed an order with our country for eight million Emotion Registers. How do you like that ? Talk about our finest hour, eh ? It's something worth celebrating, eh ? Landlord, drinks on the house, please, drinks absolutely on the house !"

When Bunnian's chauffeur arrived half an hour later to announce that another car was waiting outside, the bar was packed with happy customers. They exuded sweetness and light and Guinness. The minister's impromptu visit had been a roaring success ; many customers were heard openly to exult that he was " just an ordinary chap " or " just like one of us," instead of finding this a cause for foreboding. Bunnian so exactly played the democratic role, even allowing a gentleman farmer to slap his back, that a group of imbibers near the door burst spontaneously into " For He's a Jolly Good Fellow," as the minister left.

Later in the evening Merrick mustered Jimmy, Jasmine and Guy, and within half an hour the party was enjoying a dinner which included an impeccable chicken Maryland in a roadhouse outside Esher. After coffee and liquers, they wandered out into a flowering courtyard over which dusk was gathering. A cool wind brought them a breath of phlox. Jimmy had a nicely cushioned expense-account moment of guilt about it all.

Guy said quietly, as Merrick, prompted by the scent of phlox, started to reminisce to Alyson and his wife, " Have you had any more dealings with Rose English ?"

The question was one Jimmy had been expecting ; something small and dark had warned him back at Hampton Court that Guy was waiting to launch this very subject. And until the actual moment when the question was spoken, he could not say whether he dreaded or welcomed it, whether he never wished to mention Rose again or wanted to talk of nobody else. He was whisked back to the hour he had left her at Ghearing and Flowers, when he hurried away from her through the thick streets, striving to interpret and master what had happened to him ; the buildings about him seemed to have a slight top-heaviness they had caught from Rose ; the insanely stylised heads in a milliner's he passed—bronze things, dead and guillotined, nothing like Rose—reminded him of Rose.

" She didn't want to see me again," Jimmy said.

And Guy was suddenly so changed that Jimmy looked at him in surprise to hear him say, " She told me she was dedicated to her work. She will only have anyone once. It's just the way she is, Solent."

He needed to say nothing more—truth rolled over Jimmy like an eclipse. That Thursday night, once so resonant, so grand, was now firmly nailed in the paltry box into which Rose herself

had already cast it. There had been a Thursday night for this smarmy little go-getter too ! Thursday nights for Rose were like fish and chips gobbled on a cheap day trip to the sea ; you had them because you were hungry, without wondering whether they came wrapped in the *Financial Times* or *Weekend Reveille*.

The sheer diabolic horridness of it—the physical shock of realising that this worm had burrowed into that hungry bed first, the distaste of realising that Guy too coddled the bleeding heart of unstaunched lust, the smart of reliving his own humiliation in that barren canteen—came down like a sack over Jimmy, making his chicken Maryland heave.

He hated himself, he hated Rose, he hated Guy. Breaking away from the latter, who stood by alertly, obviously ready to swap intimacies, Jimmy took Alyson by a cool arm.

" Let's go in again," he said. " I need another drink."

" I think it's time we went in and went home," Alyson said. " I should have brought a coat, or at least worn something different, had I known we were going to be out so late."

" Then without wishing you cold, I'm glad you didn't know," Jasmine said. " Your dress is very beautiful, my dear. Isn't it, Vincent ?"

" Very beautiful ; I've been admiring it all evening. I'd like a Scotch before we set off. What can I get you, ladies ?"

Over the drinks in the lounge, Guy found a chance to say to Jimmy, " I'll tell you what I've found out about her."

That would be, of course, the Leighton system : a probing word here, a circumspect phone call there. Jimmy did not want to hear a thing, but he listened carefully. Guy seemed under a compulsion to speak, and he to hear.

" There is some mystery about the Rose which I have yet to get to the bottom of," Guy said. " She's part of the Norman dynasty, but it's difficult to fit her into it. All of them are nearly as elusive as she is. Felix Garside you saw at the Clunes' party ; he's the big noise of the family as well as the big noise in Iral. He is supposed to be Rose's uncle, but I don't quite see how. He has a sister called Gwendoline who married old Norman ; when Norman died, Gwendoline took over his cash and his work and married a Russian emigre, Demyanski, though everyone still refers to her as Gwendoline Norman. This fellow Demyanski studied the brain under the Stalinist regime, when apparently he had some pretty gruesome opportunities for working on living humans. Demyanski and Gwen-

doline Norman between them cooked up the ER idea, but as he died suddenly three years ago, full credit for the invention goes to her. There is a TV programme due on her work soon. I'd seriously advise you to take a look at it, Solent.

" Gwendoline had a daughter by old Norman called Rachel, another recluse like her mother, by all accounts. Our dear Rose might well be a sister of Rachel's, although that is something I've yet to discover ; nobody seems to know. Quite obviously, there is a security screen a mile high round them. I'll phone you if I find anything else of relevance, Solent."

" Thanks," said Jimmy. Relevant ! Nothing Guy had said was relevant in any way to the suffocation Jimmy was experiencing. These were just tedious facts which somehow lulled Guy but brought Jimmy no anodyne. As they climbed into Merrick's car, Guy, full of brotherly feeling, patted Jimmy's arm ; skilfully, Jimmy inserted Mrs. Merrick between them. Alyson rode in the front with Merrick.

nine

Next day, the waylaying of the Minister of Health at Stipend was headline news. The papers gave publicity to both Bunnian and GREP. Photographs of the little man who looked like a commercial traveller featured in several reports ; falling into a pig's trough during his hasty retreat, he had been unable to extricate his leg, and so had been apprehended by the local police. His name was Roger Wellknock and he got six months.

Within twenty-four hours, four women in different parts of the country came forward and identified Wellknock as their husband. Thus the Secretary of the Stipend and Rural District Branch of GREP stood unmasked as a bigamist—quite, as Donald Hortense remarked with relish, quite a big bigamist. So the first physical blow struck by the Bourgoynists brought the group into disrepute. Wellknock had the best of reasons for not wishing to wear the truth-revealing ER ; so, it transpired, had a good many other members of the group. As generally happens in such cases, the unfavourable publicity this minority received blanketed out the good intentions of the majority of the group.

Big Bill Bourgoyne himself was above suspicion ; he was still the last staunch defender of the good old status quo, and as such earned vociferous support from the gerontocracy of the

rich retired. Looking back, we can only feel surprise that this murmurous chorus, containing as it did the swan songs of many prominent citizens, most of them older than the century, did not more influence public events ; perhaps it is that the average man who leads, if only economically, an unsheltered life, is apt to laugh at all grey-haired defenders of the status quo, for he realises, however inarticulately, that there is no such thing as a status quo. There is, instead, a continual rate of change, only noticeable as one becomes unable to change oneself.

The GREP, however, never became merely a figure of fun. This was partly due to the integrity of Bourgoyne himself and partly to the number of hooligans who rose unexpectedly, towards the end of August, to join the ranks of the maiden ladies. They were out for excitement. Oil drum rolling was a pleasure. Suddenly they turned into rebels with a cause and became Bourgoynists. Young delinquents who had their hands on nothing else carried HANDS OFF SEX placards and flung stones at 10 Downing Street.

As the fine August days shortened towards September, a wave of unrest swept the country. In particular, the shy, the reserved, the defeatist, found that now they revealed their feelings involuntarily they had demolished the greatest barrier which kept them from mingling with others. A life of fulfilment was no longer beyond them. It was chiefly from this class of people that the outburst of licentiousness predicted by Alyson Youngfield came.

The effect of this minor disturbance was to make life generally more gay, more hectic. " Pinking parties " became the thing ; the Unloveable Young made whoopee on a scale which exceeded the mad twenties, as they toasted the forthcoming September 1, " The September Revolution," when the kill-joys without headlights would be slung into clink.

Even their seniors, the middle-aged, joined in the optimism. As Mrs. Pidney, the landlady at 17 Charlton Square remarked sagaciously, " It's something that's taken people's minds off unnatural things like films and TV." It had indeed. Beauty contests enjoyed a new vogue ; their judging was infinitely simplified now that the pinking output of the judges could be recorded and measured.

This vast diversion in public life did not fail to divert Jimmy Solent. Yet he could not be called a happy man. His rejection by Rose he had borne as best he could ; but Guy Leighton's

chance words had been the last straw which made everything intolerable. He threw himself with sick energy into the organisation of the IBA Haiti exhibition.

In this, however, he was unable to absorb himself completely. Alyson and Aubrey began to prove an unexpected worry ; as the time for them to make a final decision on wearing NL's drew near, they grew increasingly nervous. The dark patches under Alyson's eyes darkened.

On the last Tuesday of the month, when less than one week's grace remained to the people still without registers, Jimmy presented himself at Donald's house. Donald was celebrating the receipt of a cheque for a poem published two years ago in a Glasgow little review. An ally of Donald's happening to be in that centre of industry, had descended on the editor and threatened him with a black eye if the cheque was not immediately forthcoming. The cheque for two guineas had been immediately forthcoming, whereupon Donald had bought five guineas' worth of drink to celebrate.

" Where's your brother and his girl ?" Donald asked when Jimmy arrived. " Aren't they coming ?"

" Aubrey's working late as usual," Jimmy said. " The BIL is a sort of high-class sweat-shop nowadays, but they're hoping to try and drop in later. What on earth's that concoction you've got there, Donald ?"

Donald was squatting by the fireplace in a room full of men, boyish-looking girls, and girlish-looking boys. Bottles of madeira and cheap red wine stood by the fender, while in an electric frying pan the IBA librarian brewed a mixture from which murky fumes wreathed.

" It's chilly tonight," Donald said. " End of the heat wave, probably. I thought a drop of Brontosaurus Blood would warm everyone up. We can shove the Unloveable Young corpses under the bed as they fall."

" The thunder lizards give their gizzards up to Bacchus' altar," Jimmy began rhyming to himself, as he sipped half a tumbler-full of the brew, but was unable to think of an apt conclusion. " Gibraltar, Malta, halter ? Despite our brains, would our remains make booze sweeter or salter ? This is a childish habit, James ; you must grow out of it, or else write it down and send it to *Punch* . . ."

The Brontosaurus' Blood proved, in fact, rather insipid. The conversation, too, was the kind one usually met with at Donald's. Donald lived with a commercial artist called Spud Witherd who worked in an advertising agency. During the day, Spud painted insanely healthy people throwing beach balls about ; at night he painted ferocious, worm-like things which swam in geometrical puddles. The worm-like things were called oscillids ; Spud sat on a bed now, explaining it all carefully and patiently just as Jimmy had once heard it explained to him. He wondered if Spud enjoyed saying the same piece over and over again, and had to presume he did.

" The funny thing *is*," a girl in slacks said at Jimmy's elbow, " that although Spud's theories are an awful lot of cock, his paintings really have something."

That was just it. The pictures of people with beach balls could not bother anybody, but these gangrenous worms could oscillate their way into bothering you quite seriously.

" That's how the world works," Jimmy said, eyeing the girl with a growing ghost of interest. " The obvious shouldn't interest anybody. If it does, it's because people have been bred silly, like chickens. I mean . . ." But what he meant, in the noise and smoke, eluded him. It was going to be something large and grand, that he recalled ; it would have impressed the girl. What was that dreadful smell, Donald's brew or the varnish burning on the boards under his frying pan ? " I've been haunted for weeks," he ended, " by something which sounds obvious but wasn't so to me. A girl said to me, ' You don't give me a thing,' and I couldn't understand it."

" Sounds simple enough," the girl in slacks said. She had a black sweater, long eyelashes and short pigtails ; she looked vaguely like Aubrey Hepburn. She also looked vaguely like moving on at any minute.

" Oh, don't worry about it ; I don't," Jimmy said hastily. Various faculties, waking as if from sleep, were prompting him that this girl was attractive.

" I wasn't worrying," she said.

" Now you're blushing."

" I'm not. It's your Norman Light. It's gone a disgusting colour. And I may as well tell you now, if you're thinking that sort of thing, you're wasting your time. I prefer female company."

The faculty curled up and went to sleep again—almost, for you never knew when a spot of physiotherapy might not convert these borderline cases. In its place, another faculty awoke and informed Jimmy that music was playing.

" Let's dance, beautiful," he said at once.

" Nobody else is dancing."

" *Here*, that's a reason for dancing."

" You're a funny feller !" she exclaimed without animation.

" Oh call me Jimmy," he said in boredom ; what the hell did it matter anyway ? To his mild surprise, she came into his arms, and they jogged about among the crowd, which showed few signs of resentment. He developed a slight albedo again, and the pink light lay along her smooth cheekbones.

They jogged round the room somnambulistically, occasionally encountering among the throng another couple who had set up in opposition to them. The now unremarkable pink glow had settled over every corner of the room ; only with difficulty in such cramped space could one tell who glowed at whom.

" It's all old hat," Jimmy told himself. " Already it's all old hat. The shine's worn off the shiners already. Someone bring on the dancing girls."

He realised he had spoken aloud, but the girl did not seem to notice.

He had shuffled past one corner half a dozen times before noticing it contained a TV set, which was switched on. The face of a woman of about sixty looked out of it ; she talked without a sound being audible in the noisy room. She had a strong jaw and good cheekbones and was still handsome. There was, Jimmy thought vaguely, more of the teacher than the mother about her, and then he knew of whom she reminded him : Rose! This was the programme Guy Leighton had told him about, a feature on the invention of ER's.

Forgetting all about the girl, Jimmy released her and knelt down beside the set to turn the volume up. A fellow in a check shirt whose back he brushed against turned round and said curiously, " Aren't you the New Zealander who got chucked out of Zombie Sexton's the other night ?"

" Yes," Jimmy said, twiddling the knob.

The volume on the set came up with a roar and the grey-haired woman bellowed across the room. " It was at that time that I first met Ivan Demyanski." A waggish member of the

party applauded and called " Here, here." Spinning the knob, Jimmy got the speaker to continue, at a manageable decibel output, " Of course I was familiar with his work. Ivan was a friend of Pavlov's and, working along similar lines, had been getting similarly notable results. What I was not familiar with was Ivan's great charm. He fled from Russia to the west, arriving in England in very poor health."

" And I believe you personally nursed him back to health ?" prompted an unseen interviewer.

" I did. In the process, exchanging information about our pet lines of research, Ivan and I came to the conclusion that by pooling our knowledge we might make an original contribution to science. Meanwhile, although we were getting a bit long in the tooth, we fell in love, got married in 1953, and by then the theory of Emotional Registration was well on its way."

This was Gwendoline Norman then, a close relation of Rose's according to Guy. She not only resembled Rose ; she spoke in a similarly direct fashion which came over even in a scripted talk. For Jimmy, this similarity made painful watching.

He was now spared further agony. Gwendoline Norman's face vanished, supplanted by miles of gleaming Norman laboratory, as other voices took up the tale.

Jimmy quickly lost interest. These shots of microscopes and hypodermics, these diagrams of the brain, were all standard stuff. Even as a layman, he could tell that the scientific patter gave nothing away. The Norman empire, as Guy had pointed out, had too much on the ball.

Sighing, Jimmy lay back more comfortably to listen to Gwendoline who had now reappeared on the screen.

" Our world grows increasingly complex," she was saying. " This is nothing to be feared ; the way, not only of progress, but of mere survival lies in continual mechanisation. It is useless for us now to cry for the abolition of machines. To adapt a current phrase, the opposite of progress is not retrenchment but stagnation. Without machines, this island would be over-populated far beyond subsistence level ; with them, we all live comfortably. What we are entitled to complain of is the threat to the individual in the increasing standardisation which mechanisation involves. All of us at times experience a desire for some key to the maze about us ; we wish to see below its surface. We find our acquaintances depersonalised, and long to know what they really feel. The device Ivan Demyanski and

I have developed is offered as a key to that question. I do urge those of you who have not yet had your Emotion Register installed to get one free during the next week, and join our great and growing new society. Remember, it's only a minor operation ; you won't feel a thing, and . . ."

" Sales talk !" the man in the check shirt shouted. " Switch this rubbish off for cry's ache !"

This roused Jimmy. He had been so raptly watching the lineaments of Rose in Gwendoline's face, and so intently trying to listen through the noise in the room, that he had failed to realise how much this noise had increased in his corner.

The man in the check shirt shouted something about Zombie Sexton ; Jimmy, who had never heard of this gentleman nodded his head enthusiastically, winked, and disappeared into the crowd. He then, for about an hour, rediscovered the profound truth that, exciting as the promise of a party may be, its actuality is generally dull. He had resigned himself to the non-arrival of his brother and Alyson and was composing himself for his own departure, when a diversion occurred.

Presumably to offset the effects of the Norman broadcast, the Bourgoynists had turned out in strength. Two lorries, loaded with supporters and equipped with loudspeakers, were coming down Queen Victoria Street from the direction of Cannon Street. A queue of private cars, trade vehicles and No. 24 buses followed them. Hecklers surrounded the lorries. The amplified voices were almost drowned by shouting and the derisive hoots of passing cars. Objects were being thrown both from and at the lorries. One of the minor obstacles working against the GREP was that eggs that summer stood at only two shillings a dozen, cheaper than they had been for years. Eggs were being thrown now.

The tone of the crowd was distinctly more hostile to the GREP than it had been. Thanks particularly to the daily papers, who enjoy a little injudicious levity, the GREP had come to be regarded mainly as a crackpot organisation. If this attitude had hampered the group's serious aims, it had at least protected them so far from serious opposition, if not from police intervention. But now even the dimmest of the public realised that the whole success of the government's ER campaign lay in *everyone* wearing a light ; in the country of the three-eyed, the two-eyed man is king.

The procession had drawn opposite Donald's windows when a man, leaping from the crowd, broke two empty jam jars under the tyres of the first lorry. Amid a squeak of escaping air, the vehicle stopped. The driver flung himself from his cab in an attempt to catch the jar-thrower. A fight developed like a flash. A little man, an anti-Bourgoynist bearing a notice saying MAN CANNOT LIVE IN BED ALONE, brought his wooden board crashing down on a charging head. The more fiery male members of GREP launched themselves off the lorry into the fray while their gentler companions stood up and cheered them on. The loudspeaker in the rear lorry barked, " We are not pacifists ! We shall not hesitate to use force ! We warn the government we shall not hesitate to use force ! We warn you all we shall not hesitate to use force !"

Nor had Bourgoyne allowed his flock to go unarmed among the ravening multitude. As the crowd tried to storm the tail-boards, the occupants of the lorries produced pick handles and walloped any skulls or fingers within reach. A man staggered away howling, clutching a dented ER.

The partygoers had crowded to the window to watch.

" What are we waiting for ?" Donald Hortense exclaimed. Uttering an obscene Scribist war cry, he charged from the room and down the stairs, a quarter of his party following him. Jimmy, Brontosaurus Blood boiling in his veins, was only a few steps behind his friend.

They issued into the crowded street just in time to see a taxi, which had nothing whatsoever to do with the GREP, heaved over on to its side by the mob. The rear door falling uppermost opened and a man climbed out ; he was promptly punched on the nose by one of the rioters. He half turned to shield his face, and in that instant Jimmy saw it was Aubrey.

" That's my brother ! Come on !" he shouted, seizing Donald's shoulder, and the Scribist party elbowed their way over to the taxi. The street was in an uproar. Someone from a nearby window was flinging buckets of water down on the crowd ; police whistles sounded, the loudspeaker still blared angrily, but already the crowds were thinning. Blows had given way to running kicks, attack to retreats down the nearest passages. The GREP on the lorry, all boarders repelled, sang " Sons of the Sea ":

> But you can't beat the boys of the bulldog breed ;
> They made old England's name.

The driver of the overturned taxi, fists raised, back to the roof of his vehicle, offered to take on all comers ; but the comers were too busy going. Skirting him, Jimmy peered into the back of the wreck. As he had expected, Alyson was there.

"Fancy meeting you !" she exclaimed somewhat breathlessly.

While Donald and some of his party took Aubrey by the arm, leading him back into the house, Jimmy helped Alyson climb out. Although pale and shaken, she had suffered nothing worse than a few bruises. She leant gratefully on Jimmy as he helped her upstairs.

In the street, miraculously emptied now except for a few unhappy witnesses talking or refusing to talk to policemen, posters saying DON'T BE BROWBEATEN and HANDS OFF SEX lay covered with footprints, and the driver of the overturned taxi swore with melancholy vigour at the driver of the ambushed lorry.

Aubrey, his nose bleeding profusely, lay on the floor of Donald's bedroom with a key down his back. Alyson sat on the bed smoking a cigarette. Over the bed, reminder of Donald's Scribist sense of humour, a bit of Devonshire poker-work bearing the Ilfracombe crest said " All the World's Queer Save Me and Thee, and even Thee's a Little Queer."

The man in the check shirt bustled in with an inch of red wine in toothglasses, medicine for the two victims.

" Just like Zombie Sexton's," he said cheerfully to Jimmy, shaking his head with evident relish. " Do you take trouble with you wherever you go ?"

" It's the old Auckland heritage," Jimmy said modestly, making himself frightfully busy with Alyson.

" I'm sorry we were so late," Alyson said to Donald. Her hand trembled as she lifted the cigarette to her lips. " We got held up behind the procession. I've never heard so much propaganda in my life. Love is something degrading which should be neither heard about nor seen—according to the GREP. I've lost all the sympathy I ever felt for them."

Jimmy found himself wondering once again why a reasonable girl like Alyson had not, like all the other reasonable girls, had her ER installed. Aubrey had his religious reasons, thin as they sounded, for defection ; not so Alyson. Perhaps she had a loyal desire to give Aubrey what support she could ; but to hear that she had undergone a change of heart was a great relief to him.

" Norman Lights'll never iron out society," the check shirt said, " because society has too many crinkles in it, but if they just succeed in revealing the homosexual laws for the nonsense they are they'll have done a worthwhile job."

" Are you one of those ?" Aubrey asked from his prone position.

" So they tell me," the check shirt said lightly, but he turned to face Aubrey as if answering a challenge in the other's voice.

" I'm afraid I don't much care for your sort," Aubrey said.

Then began a painfully embarrassing scene. Aubrey, his nostrils still seeping blood, began to denounce the check shirt and all his kind. The check shirt interrupted hotly once or twice, but Donald restrained him. Alyson sat silent on the bed, her cheeks hot.

When Aubrey had finished, the check shirt said angrily, " You realise, don't you, that *we* realise there's something wrong with you to make you talk like that ?"

" Why should that be so ?" Aubrey asked. " You would accept objective judgments in other spheres ; why not in this ?"

" Never mind arguing ! You've had your say," Donald told him. " I don't believe you know what you're talking about, but you've had your say. Now will you get out ?" He turned to Alyson, said tartly, " I'm sorry about this," and walked from the room. After a moment, in which he surveyed Aubrey with murderous contempt, the man in the check shirt said, quietly and with impressive ambiguity, " Whatever the band plays, you've always got your own music."

Then he too left the room.

" Get up and let's get home," Jimmy said savagely. " I wonder they didn't paste hell out of you, Aubrey, and I'm not sure I oughtn't to do so now. If I were Donald, I'd . . ."

" Be quiet, Jimmy," Alyson said. " Can't you see Aubrey's not himself ? He's been frightened. Go and get us a cab, can't you ? Let's just get out of here."

Back at the flat, Aubrey staggered into a chair, buried his face in his hands, and started groaning.

" I'll draw the curtains," Alyson said. As she did so, she looked down into Charlton Square. Nobody was in sight there. Although the central grass looked brown and parched after the three weeks of sunshine, a kind of freshness came up from the tree-fringed space. The mere absence of humanity was a tonic in itself ; it was good to be reminded at intervals that

the world was not man's, that he was nothing more than the temporarily dominant species on an enduring planet.

Nevertheless, it was quite a party he was having.

" It's a nice evening," Alyson said, bundling all her thoughts together into the tritest possible words.

" Don't be funny," Jimmy said irritably. " Cart this goon off to bed, will you ? He's been drinking."

" Come here, Jimmy darling," Alyson said without fondness.

" I'm not in the mood," Jimmy said.

" What if I have been drinking ?" Aubrey asked slowly. He pulled his face out of his cupped palms and turned it towards them ; it was unrecognisable. Its circumference was white, merging to a bile yellow towards the middle, where, dead on target, a swollen proboscis hung like a mature Victoria plum.

" What if I have been drinking ?" Aubrey said a second time. " Everything's in a muddle, isn't it ? You're too damn busy enjoying yourself, but I've got a responsible boast—post, I mean, damn it. I mean I don't want to be immodest, but I've got a responsible post, and if we aren't careful, the whole thing's going to fall through."

" What thing are you talking about ?" Jimmy asked impatiently.

" The thing of course, the deal. The deal we're doing with Switzerland, the eighteen million pound deal to supply ER's. Now do you understand ? I've got commitments. We can't let the Swiss down, but this strike is going to put us all behindhand."

Shaking his head, Jimmy looked appealingly at Alyson.

" What strike does he mean ? The strike he got on his nose?"

" Why don't you read the papers ?" Aubrey asked savagely. He heaved himself out of the chair, standing tensely erect. The blood was returning to his face now, making him look less like a Chinese mask at a Kung Hee Fat Choy festival.

" I'm too busy to read the papers," Jimmy said.

" Yes, too busy enjoying yourself !"

" I'm not enjoying myself !"

Crossing heavily to the dinerette, Aubrey pulled the evening paper off one of the chairs. Dramatically and offensively, he held it under Jimmy's nose. Black headlines announced that steelworkers were striking all over the country, following a lead set by Cadaver Alloys, manufacturers of the metal discs of the ER's. So much Jimmy saw before knocking the paper from his brother's grasp.

" Let's go to bed," he said.

Alas, the discrepancy between what we intend and what we do is frequently obvious even to ourselves. Once between the sheets, Jimmy realised that far from putting his brother in his place, he had merely behaved boorishly. Aubrey was under strain and obviously needed a little consideration.

Jimmy had, in fact, read of the strike in the steel industry. It had made so little impression on him that he had failed to connect it with Aubrey, or even with the BIL.

Besides, the papers were full of gloom at present, if you looked hard enough. The drought. The British Ambassador kicked out of Jordan or wherever it was. The plague of caterpillars in Somerset. The recession in America making itself felt over here. The Pope's condemnation of ER's. The birth of three- and four-legged babies in Japan. Outbreaks of mutiny here and there in the British Army. And all the rest of it. One had to take it with a pinch of salt.

It was no good being pessimistic.

ten

The Haiti collection was growing. A Bible belonging to the mulatto President Boyer ; contemporary lithographs of the sumptuous coronation of Emperor Faustin I ; the white, yellow, green and crimson uniform of the first Count of Limonade ; the photographs of Marie-Louise's grave in Pisa ; and many other enticing exhibits had alread been assembled. Jimmy sat in his room in the IBA, staring rather blankly at them all.

The organising of the exhibition had become more than a job of work to Jimmy. Above all, it was the brief reign of Henri Christophe, the king known simply to his subjects as " L'Homme," which fascinated him. That Negro, who created a fully functioning state out of chaos by persistent resolution and ingenuity (and who made all that the British government was now doing look unimaginative), seemed to Jimmy the most surprising, if not the greatest monarch, who had ever lived.

This morning, however, after the *gaffe* made by his brother the previous night, Jimmy had other things than Henri on his mind.

The inter-com phone rang. Jimmy jumped.

" Solent," he said.

It was Donald.

" Jimmy ? Your book from the Sam Untermeyer Heights University has arrived. Would you like to come up and get it?"

As he climbed the stairs, nodding dumbly to Mrs. Charteris —there still seemed nothing to say to her—Jimmy knew Donald had not changed. Charladies burst gossiping from lecture room to lecture room. Behind the door labelled " House Organ," Bloody Trefisick could be heard bellowing at his secretary. All was well with the world, now as ever.

Donald was still unpacking the book, loaned specially for the Haiti exhibition, when Jimmy entered his workroom behind the library. It was a small, calf-bound volume entitled " La Partie de Chasse du Roi," 1820, and was the last book ever to issue from Henri Christophe's royal press in the shadow of La Ferriere. Just to hold the volume filled Jimmy with a stir of emotion.

" Having *books* in your exhibition !" Donald said. " What would our founder say ?" He did a curtsey in the direction of the nearest photo of Clyde B. Nitkin and put on a broad transatlantic accent. " ' Material wealth is when both ends meet ; intellectual poverty is when book ends meet.' Moral : don't leave your wooden elephants cheek to cheek or Nitkin will take you to tusk."

" Cease this elephantine humour," Jimmy said, adding as he caught sight of the science fiction magazine on Donald's desk, " What's Carnell on about this month ?"

" Evolution and religion," Donald said. " It's quite interesting. The theological view is that Earthmen are in a fallen state, consequently any improvements in our lot the sciences may effect are not worth a curse. From the evolutionary point of view, on the other hand, we cannot be fallen since we've hardly had time to rise : it's only some two hundred and fifty generations since the Bronze Age. The climb we've got to make is worth making for its own sake, whatever may be at its destination."

" It is if we think it is."

" Do you think it is ?" Donald asked.

" Frequently. Just as I don't believe in Heaven but am fully cognizant of hell, I don't believe in progress but fear stagnation."

" My dear fellow, how very contemporary of you !" Donald said.

"How do you feel about it then?" Jimmy asked, unsure, as he often was, whether Donald was indulging in sarcasm or self-defence.

" I have no right to any feelings about progress or evolution," Donald said. " Your brother made it quite clear last night that people on the right side of the fence regard my kind as anti-evolutionary. And of course from that point of view he's perfectly right. This horrible, blind, daft, thing called evolution has no interest in feelings ; its only concern is propagation of the next generation. But to return to science fiction, these boys are really happy about the Norman Lights, you know. It's something right out of their stable. They haven't been more cock-a-hoop since the Earth satellites went up."

Grateful for this change of topic, Jimmy said, " Did I ever tell you Scryban caught me reading a collection of science fiction stories when I was first here ? He picked it up, examined it, and then quoted Shakespeare : ' This is an art, which does mend nature, change it rather ; but the art itself is nature.' "

" Hm. He did the same thing on me. Same quotation."

" How disappointing of him ! A neat little tag for every situation. I regret to say I always suspected it of him."

" Well, you know what they say, Jimmy. Doesn't matter how daft you act, provided you talk sense."

Jimmy slunk back to his room, clutching the precious copy of " La Partie de Chasse du Roi." He put it on to his desk and sat down with a sigh, Donald's words echoing in his mind, " Doesn't matter how daft you act . . ."

" If anyone has ever acted daft, I have," Jimmy told himself. " Getting mixed up with Rose was the work of an idiot. Getting mixed up about her is the work of twenty idiots. It's like a fatal illness. The mere brute fact that I shall never see her again —that I hate and detest her—makes no difference. I still want her. It's like a smell under your nose ; it may be a beautiful smell, but you don't want it with every lungful of air you take. If only I could shake it off, pull myself together."

He was still sitting there picking his past over when Mrs. Wolf came in. It had become a habit with her to drop in and chat for a few minutes, generally before coffee ; though they could hardly be said to have much in common, they passed the day pleasantly enough. This morning, though, Mrs. Wolf had more than gossip on her mind.

" Jimmy, my dear, have you spoken to Conrad Scryban this morning ?" she asked, her mascara'd eyes wide. When Jimmy said he had not, she continued, " Without wishing to say anything at all behind his back—you know how I feel about good personal relationship—I really fear the poor dear man has gone crackers."

" You intrigue me. What makes you think that ?"

Mrs. Wolf said : " Conrad has joined the Bourgoynists."

Thoughtfully, Jimmy took his fountain pen off the desk and sucked the end of it. . .

" Yes, it is odd ; I mean, I know people are still signing on with the GREP, but old Scryban's hardly the type . . ."

" It's more than odd," Mrs. Wolf said impatiently. " It's frightening. I can't think what's coming over people."

She broke off, looking round in surprise as the door burst open. Martin Trefisick, the Devon-born Cornishman, came in, his face a deep crimson enlivened by touches of aquamarine.

" Veronica," he shouted at Mrs. Wolf—it was the first time he had spoken to her for weeks—" Veronica, has Scryban had you in his room this morning, maundering out his bloody rubbish ?"

" Yes," she said. " Though I would hardly call it *rubbish.* I was in there with him about ten minutes ago, and he had Miss Redfern in before me—"

" He's having the whole staff in there one at a time," Trefisick shouted. He stamped round the room in fury, breathing like a pair of bellows.

" What is all this ?" Jimmy asked. " What did Scryban say ?"

" Say ? What did he say ? What do you think he said ? He had confounded cheek to ask me—*me* !—to join the Bourgoynists."

" That's what he wanted me to do," Mrs. Wolf said, adding coolly, " but I should have thought he was on more promising ground with you, Martin. After all, you have stubbornly refused to have your ER installed."

" So I should think ! A pity there aren't more individuals like me about ! But just because I refuse to be regimented, is that any reason why I should be expected to associate with that crackpot of a fellow Bourgoyne and his rabble ? Do use a bit of sense, Veronica ! Bloody sauce, I call it, interfering with our private opinions—not that I've ever attempted to keep my

opinions private. I hate the mere thought of wearing a silly tin medal in my skull."

In the heady glow of fulmination, Trefisick knocked heedlessly into the bookcase, sending a pile of IBA pamphlets slithering to the floor. Jimmy grew very tired of his display ; the man was plainly enjoying this excuse to wallow in his anger like a sausage in batter.

" If you feel so badly about Norman Lights, I should have thought your obvious course was to join the GREP," he remarked, cutting off Trefisick in full spate, " As you say, they take all sorts."

Thrusting out his jaw, Trefisick turned on Jimmy.

" It's all a question of principle, Solent. I wouldn't expect you to understand. Your generation is all the same ; you don't know how to vote or think or act. You're stumped from the word ' go,' a poor wishy-washy lot. So just keep your mouth shut, will you ?"

" I like that !" Jimmy exclaimed, jumping up. " You barge in here and lout about round my room like a prison warder with all Dartmoor to himself, and then you expect me to say nothing while you air your prejudices. You can—"

" Solent !" Trefisick roared. " Solent ! I'll have you flung out of here on your neck ! If you think I'm going—"

The house phone rang.

" Please both of you stop shouting and answer that phone," Mrs. Wolf said. " There is really no need to argue."

" That's the whole trouble with England today !" the Cornishman said, changing his tack. " Nobody can see any need to argue. ' Never mind discussing anything, let's join a group ; then we needn't think.' Do you wonder the whole system's falling to bits ? Veronica, you surprise—"

" Yes, Solent here, Mr. Scryban," Jimmy said with emphasis into the mouthpiece of the phone, smiling cynically when Trefisick instantly fell silent. " Yes, I'll come up at once."

He put the phone down again.

" Your turn," Mrs. Wolf said, with detectable complacency. " Now don't you let him talk you into anything."

Going out through the exhibition room, Jimmy nodded wordlessly to Mrs. Charteris and took the lift up to Scryban.

Scryban sat at his desk with his hands clasped on it, rolling a little tub of harlequin matches to and fro. His pipe with the

amber mouthpiece was clasped between his teeth, unlit. He looked at once grave, flustered, and a little pleased with himself. A slight red line on the jaw of his well-tended countenance showed that this morning Scryban had cut himself shaving.

Nodding to Jimmy and indicating a chair, he said, in a brisker manner than he usually employed, " From the roaring I heard over your phone, I take it that Martin Trefisick was with you ; in which case I have no doubt that you arrive with some notion of what I am about to say."

He glanced sharply at Jimmy, continuing without waiting for his assent.

" It is Thursday today. On Saturday evening the ER Installation Centres will be closing down all over the country. On Monday, September 2, fines and imprisonment will be the lot of all those who have declined to visit the centres. It will be called prosecution ; it will be persecution.

" Perhaps you will realise that my views of politics have tended to incline, in the past, towards the frivolous. I admit it —and it is a common error, Solent. For though politics is a weighty matter, who can take politicians seriously ? The talkers are on top, the thinkers underneath ; the dissemination of Demosthenes, that smooth-tongued lawyer, by our public schools and universities, has combined with methods of televisual publicity to corrupt our governmental system from the top ; or perhaps it is as the Persian proverb has it, that a rotten fish stinks from the head. It is difficult to diagnose certainly when one is oneself part of the malady. However—"

It occurred to Scryban that he was wandering from the subject. He frowned at the lapse, at the same time stroking his tonsure with some complacency.

" To reserve judgment is an English habit," he continued, " and that is what many of us have done since ER's were first introduced. We hoped indeed that the governmental view of these devices as simplifiers of life might prove correct ; in the event, I think it has proved incorrect. The end has failed to justify the always doubtful means."

" I can't quite agree with that," Jimmy said, his voice husky with disuse.

" I am talking not of particular cases, but of the country generally. Trouble is universal, violence endemic, licentiousness rampant. There is mutiny in the army, idleness in the factories and, so I hear, unrest even at the Foreign Office. All

this is attributable to the introduction of Norman Lights. They are, you see, installed under a terrible misconception, which should have been recognised as such months ago, before the whole lunatic scheme was put into effect. The misconception is, of course, that sex plays a dominant part in people's lives."

" You mean you think it doesn't ?" Jimmy asked in surprise. With the plastic venetian blinds down against the sun, it was quiet in Scryban's room. The traffic in the Tottenham Court Road snored distantly.

Allowing himself a sickly sarcastic smile, Scryban said, "Sex is as much the preoccupation of this century as reason was of the eighteenth. Unfortunately, we have the mechanical means of raising our preoccupation to godhood. We shall be enslaved by that which we should conquer. That is why there is a twofold reason for rejecting the ER. In a not unimportant sense, we become slaves of our government when we permit these things on our forehead ; in a much deeper sense, we also become slaves of ourselves. Our baser selves."

Although he delivered this speech with earnestness and what, for him, was simplicity, Conrad Scryban spoilt the effect by leaning back at the end of it to survey Jimmy with a kind of proprietorial interest. The mere look of him turned Jimmy into an Unloveable Young Person.

" I can see you are naturally worried about what will happen to you next Monday," he said, " but what can *I* do about it ? I've got my ER, I'm content with it, and on the whole I think they're a good thing. All right, there's a spot of bother in the country just now, but it'll sort itself out once the new system's working properly. Any new invention seems like the end of the world when it first appears, especially to the older generation."

Scryban jumped up and walked about behind the desk, ineffectually trying to light his pipe with a succession of harlequin matches.

" You won't think for yourself," he said. "As I told you, I originally reserved judgment. But all I can see is that conditions are growing worse."

" That seems to me more a question of temperament than judgment," Jimmy observed.

" It's no good getting irritable," said Scryban irritably. " I've had a circularised letter from Bourgoyne this morning ; that's why I'm speaking to you all personally. He points out

that the country will be ruined, economically and financially, by the end of the year if present trends continue. The government must be forced from office and the compulsory ER laws rescinded."

"What does Bourgoyne expect you to do about it?" Jimmy enquired curiously.

"You've heard about the Protest March on Sunday?"

Jimmy did not like to admit his ignorance: he sat tight, letting it be presumed he took the question for a rhetorical one.

"So you haven't heard?" Scryban said, to let him know the gambit had failed. "Well, this is Bourgoyne's last attempt to stir up public feeling in the country. To my mind, he has chosen a ripe moment: when people know, the government will be forced to act drastically next week. He is personally leading a Protest March from Wembley Stadium to Chequers, where Gascadder will be in residence. The marchers leave the stadium, after an oration and a blessing from the Bishop of Coventry, at nine o'clock sharp on Sunday morning and reach Chequers by tea time. I have decided to join the march, and I was hoping that you would care to come with me, as a sign that your personal and social conscience is not dead."

Something rather helpless in his look of appeal almost won Jimmy over. He would have liked, for Scryban's sake, to march with Scryban. Then he imagined the other people he would have to march with, pictured the rash of Aertex shirts; the hideous frocks of the women; the yelps of unwearying urchins; the accompanying impedimenta of bags of buns and bottles of pop; the silly banners; the aroma of sweat when the march was on and the pathetic milling around when it was over; and above all the spurious camaraderie engendered by the whole self-conscious affair, expressing itself in the shared vacuum flask, the would-be witty joke, the slap on the back.

"Sorry. It's not my cup of tea at all," he muttered and stood up to end the interview.

"It's so much easier not to get involved in anything, isn't it, Solent?" Scryban remarked without sympathy as he watched Jimmy walking out. After another abortive attempt at lighting his pipe, he turned glumly to the phone and summoned Donald Hortence.

No sooner had Jimmy emerged into the corridor than he was seized by Mrs. Wolf. She almost dragged him into her room,

digging her sharp and brightly painted nails into his wrist. She shut the door behind them with a little gasp.

" I had to get you in here or that terrible man Trefisick would have cornered us again !" she exclaimed, staring avidly up at him. " Oh Jimmy, I've only just got away from him—he'd talk the hind legs off a donkey. He's outside now. Well, what did Conrad have to say to you ?"

Jimmy offered the she-wolf a cigarette and took one himself. He was not sure how comfortable he felt about being closetted in here.

" Said the country was going to pot, wanted me to hike out and talk to the Prime Minister about it—me and some others," he summarised briefly.

" Poor dear Conrad," Mrs. Wolf said unexpectedly. " I do so sympathise with him ! I have always thought of him as the martyr type, one who would one day impale himself on a lost cause. He's out of his wits, and yet . . . He may be wrong, but he's admirably wrong."

" Oh, I don't know, you know," Jimmy said ; it was his blundering attempt to suggest that Conrad Scryban might be right and the idea of a protest march wrong ; but that in neither case was he sure ; and that he rather distrusted the certainty with which other people seemed to weigh up a given situation.

" He's a Cambridge man," he added, thinking vaguely that to know all was to excuse all.

Anxious not to argue, Mrs. Wolf brightened and seized his arm. " Never mind, Jimmy," she said. " I've an idea ; why don't you come and spend the week-end with my husband and me ; we get on splendidly now, so there will be no embarrassment ; and my mother will be there—you'll like her. I can drive you down with me on Saturday afternoon. The protest marchers will be bound to pass through Surrogate on their way to Chequers. We can watch them from the house ; we should get a splendid view from the upper rooms. It will be rather fun to see Conrad Scryban at the head of them, striding along with a banner ; perhaps we can offer him refreshment as he goes by. You will come, won't you ?"

" That is exceedingly kind of you," Jimmy said.

" Not at all ; I should have asked you before, had things been easier between Kenelm and me." She had the authority and the colour of good luggage as she whisked back into the corridor, still talking brightly—eager, scaly, metropolitan.

At the head of the stairs, by an unseeing bust of Nitkin, Bloody Trefisick was waylaying Donald Hortense, exhorting him not to go in and listen to Scryban's nonsense. Donald, who evidently knew what was in the wind, wore an ominous look of patience.

" All I'm trying to say," Trefisick emphasised, banging his fist on the newel, " is that Scryban is overstepping his authority by speaking to us at all on this subject. *Books* are his line, not politics—or sex, for that matter, ha ! You'd be well-advised to ignore his summons, Donald, believe me. The man shouldn't be encouraged. It's none of his business."

Donald presented the appearance of one locking himself inside a tomb of self-control.

" Mr. Trefisick, Scryban is a different man. In his contacts with us, he shores up this diffidence behind a little dyke of learning and quotation. You can imagine then—or you could if you had any imagination—the great effort of will-power it must take for him to speak to us on this matter ; it shows how strongly, he must feel about it. The least we can do is humour the man and listen to him and let him get it off his chest."

" But he's got nothing *on* his chest except a lot of hot air about some silly parade !"

" I'd prefer, if you'll let me by, to listen to that rather than your blood-and-bluster."

Trefisick's neck turned plum colour.

" You're all the same, you Unloveable Young People—think you've seen through everything, and you can't see the nose on your own face !"

Without answering or looking around, Donald knocked on Scryban's door and entered.

" God Almighty," Jimmy remarked to himself as he went down to the cafeteria and collected his morning's coffee. "Here you have a simple thing, Scryban's wish to discuss something important. And you have four of us, the she-wolf, Bloody Trefisick, Donald, and me, all more or less of the same chunk of society. Yet we all four react differently. Amazing how even between people with much in common, irreconcilable divergences can exist—Rose English and me, for a painful example.

" Everyone's muddled up, even those who pretend to know. I was wrong myself, of course, in the first place. I'm always dashed well doing the wrong thing ; I wonder just how noticeable it is ? I thought that getting an ER was simply a

personal decision. It's not that, and it's not an open and shut case either.

" Oh God, it's politics, of course. The fate of the country depends on it, and the destiny of Western man. I've swallowed the materialist bribe, swallowed it whole. New clothes, a smart woman, a car, wine—God, I've fallen for the lot and I never really meant to. It's funny . . . Once upon a time, I intended to be the cultured type. You don't think about it for months at a stretch, then you suddenly realise where you've got to.

" But after all, where the hell else is there to go ? Certainly not on this ostentatious hiking lark with Scryban."

Finishing his coffee, Jimmy headed back for the peace of his room, but was stopped in the foyer by a cry from Mrs. Charteris.

His conscience still sore, Jimmy imagined she was at last about to burst into a tirade and confront him with never finding anything to say to her ; instead, to his relief, she announced that a call had just come through for him.

" I'm going to my room. I'll take it from there."

" Thank you, Mr. Solent. It's from a Mr. Guy Leighton."

The conscience ceased to worry as the heart began to nag. Jimmy knew this was going to be something about Rose ; his heart whirled up and down inside his chest like a maniac's yo-yo.

eleven

Guy Leighton was coy ; Guy Leighton was forceful ; Guy Leighton was, as usual, knowing. Guy, in fact had found out " all about Rose," as he put it. But Guy Leighton refused to divulge his latest knowledge over the phone, and accordingly Jimmy arranged—reluctantly, with misgivings, but nevertheless arranged—to meet him at a bar a good deal nearer the BIL than the IBA.

Jimmy arrived first. Before he got there, a fight had broken out in the saloon bar ; the loser had been carted off by his friend, but the winner, a sturdy young fellow without an ER, was still there celebrating. Although he took no interest in the affair, Jimmy gathered from snatches of overheard conversation that the quarrel had been about the wearing of Norman Lights. The loser had called the winner " a sexless so-an-so "; the winner had called the loser a " dirty little conformist "; and so blood and beer had been spilt. The atmosphere was still extra-

Continued on Page 118

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ordinarily tense with the sort of itching-trigger-finger sensibility more usually associated with the bars in Hollywood Westerns.

Jimmy could not care less. A newspaper soaking on the bar by his elbow announced an unofficial strike at Smithfield Market ; porters there were refusing to load lorries driven by men belonging to a union whose secretary had spoke sympathetically of the GREP movement. Life was indeed complicated, but so were Jimmy's feelings. He downed a dry sherry, following it desperately with a beer as he wondered why he had agreed to come here at all.

When Leighton came padding in on the balls of his feet, with the awful air of a ballet dancer turned cabinet minister, Jimmy tackled him straightaway.

" Look, Guy, old lad, I'm sorry about this, but I'm really here under false pretences. I may have given you the impression over the phone, in a moment of weakness, that I still retained some sort of interest in this woman Rose. It isn't so. She's right out of my system now, and it would bore me stiff to hear about her. So let's talk about the weather, eh? Or the unofficial strike at Smithfield. And how do you feel now about the plague of caterpillars in Somerset ?"

Without bothering to look as if he had heard a word, Guy seized Jimmy's arm and led him into a corner. Scowling, he looked over his shoulder at the nearest drinkers.

" For heaven's sake, stop being so impressive," Jimmy said loudly.

" Ssh, not so loud, Solent. You're not yourself this morning. Listen to me: this woman is one of the Normans, *the* Normans."

He paused to let this register, then continued.

" What is more, she's the crucial Norman. She's *Rachel* Norman, ma Gwendoline Norman's daughter by her first husband. Do you realise she's the king-pin of this whole business ? She's the king-pin, Solent, hiding under the alias of Rose English. Now do you wonder we bit off more than we could chew ?"

Jimmy shook his head.

" I'll get us a drink," he said.

He returned, slopping two beers, to find Guy sitting in the corner and staring blankly into space.

" Are you *sure* about this, Guy ? What did she go and change her name for ?"

" It's an alias," Guy said stupidly. " She's that kind of woman. You know, you expect her to be just a woman —not a woman, with the qualities of a man. Honestly, Solent, I'll tell you frankly, it's still like a knife in me to think of her, and I've not seen her since the night she picked you up at Sir Richard's party. And it was a couple of months before that that I . . . oh, that she picked me up."

He lapsed into glum silence. Jimmy knew what Guy was looking at : that same terrible image that he was, an image of a determined body powered by an equally determined mind, an irresistible whole that had its own flavour like poison. Jimmy faced it now, after dodging it with fair success for several weeks. It was at once obscene and comforting to have Leighton here suffering in the same way.

It churned all over in his mind again, the apocalyptic evening by the swimming pool, the inseparable, no less revealing, conversation in the canteen. He was detached enough from it to judge it now. The moralists were perfectly, boringly, undeniably, right about promiscuity. He had not known what he was letting himself in for, and he had been harmed. But Rose—Rachel—she was not promiscuous ; it was not a word one applied to her ; she only lived her life.

His life was a mere caper through a sherry jungle. On the way he had met a man-eater.

" For God's sake, Guy," he said, " why did she change her name ?"

" I tell you, she invented the NL," Guy said. He took a gulp at the beer, pulling himself together, and something of his BIL manner returned. It was like an oyster closing its shell. " At least, she almost invented it. She is Gwendoline's daughter by her first marriage. As you know Gwendoline Norman—or actually Gwendoline Demyanski—remarried in 1953, after the second world war. She and Ivan put in the neurological theory behind the Emotion Register project, but Rachel contributed just about all the technical side, which represents the really big advance."

He shrugged rather wearily.

" She's a dedicated woman, Solent. That's the whole truth of her. A dedicated woman. Nothing stands in the way of her work. Hence the assumed name ; it enables her to carry on incognito, without publicity or fuss or other interruptions. But, by golly, they're a tight lot. Iral's an establishment

within the Establishment. I told you I was investigating. Well, even at Ghearing and Flower, where Rachel works *pro tem* they don't know who she really is. Still I sorted it out. There are ways if you ask the right questions in the right places."

In a flush of complacency he drank again.

" Probably only half a dozen people in the world know what she does," he said. " And probably only half a dozen people know who she is. I don't think Sir Richard knows. I hope you're impressed, Solent."

Solent was unable to raise the fished-for compliment.

" It took me all my cunning, Solent, believe me. Do you know, she has a permanent suite at the Debroy Delmar—under her assumed name—with a sort of personal bodyguard in attendance."

" What good does this information do now you've got it ?" Jimmy enquired.

Leighton's eyelids half-closed ; perhaps he was inwardly crossing himself.

" The truth, Solent, shall set you free. I hoped to show you the impossibility of hope and the futility of desire where Miss Rose English and you were concerned."

" That's a bit of a *tu quoquo*," Jimmy answered grumpily. He suspected altruism formed no part of Guy Leighton's character. That he had told Jimmy at all probably signified that he was burning to divulge his news somewhere and had divulged it where he knew it would hurt most.

They began to speak perfunctorily of the awful state of the country. But there too Guy had inside information that the worst was yet to come ; feeling extravagantly tired of him, Jimmy stood up and announced he must get back to work.

" The tragedy is," Guy said, rising also and abandoning all pretence of interest in any subject but Rachel Norman, " that she seemed to have the ideal attitude to—well, to anything ; she appeared the ideal woman. They're frightfully hard to come by ; the more you see, the more choosy you get."

" She was a bitch," Jimmy said. He kept seeing her, sitting back detachedly, saying, " You didn't give me a thing." Of course he had given her nothing ; his comprehension of the erotic impulse was entirely amateur.

As he and Guy got to the door, preparing to part, Guy said, " This is all top secret, Solent ; perhaps I was foolish to have

spoken. I must put you on oath not to tell a soul what I have told you."

Already he was regretting his indiscretion.

" My lips are sealed," Jimmy said.

" If I'd had more cash in the bank, I might have had better—longer, success with her," Guy said bleakly as he turned away. Moving off in the other direction, Jimmy reflected how much of himself Guy inadvertently revealed in that remark. He would recall the remark again—and with dismay—before the week was up.

To be concluded

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Guest Editorial—continued

people would never know that these publishers had been involved in such a shoddy business. As much as I would like to blame the publishers for this—publisher blaming is a writer's weakness—I cannot. They are in business to publish and make money ; not to play favourites and go broke.

I must digress here to shout forth a hearty thank-you to Mr. Victor Gollancz. This gentleman, in spite of having some strange ideas on the life expectancy of homicidal nazis, is an adventurous and steel-nerved publisher. In addition to printing such controversial titles as John Brunner's *The Brink* and William Vogt's *People* ! *Challenge to Survival* ! he has had the appalling nerve to bring out a series of SF books and *label* them as such in the public press ! More power to the gentleman and we should all get behind him and help push.

In case you didn't realize it, SF is a minor field of literature. The magazines print a limited number of copies that sell almost entirely to hardened fans. Books sell in proportionally the same numbers. Because of this publishers' profits are small and writers' pay even smaller. To write SF one must be young and dedicated—or have a job on the side. Many good writers develop in SF and as soon as possible pass on to greener pastures where the returns are greater.

In comparison, detective thrillers sell by the millions, are reviewed everywhere that you might turn, and bring in buckets of money to all concerned in their production. Many thrillers are written by Dons—even female Dons—which is a meaningful statement if you examine it closely. Do Dons write by-lined articles for the more bloodthirsty sunday papers ? They do not ! The Dons may or may not be a part of the Establishment (depending upon your definition) but their activities are certainly symptomatic of it. In cruder transatlantic terms—they know on which side their bread is buttered.

Did I hear the man in the mac mumble something about SF being a special thing, an erudite interest that will never have a mass appeal. To this I respond with the pungent statement made famous by an American general. Nuts ! SF has a potentially large readership as has been proven in the United States. At the present time, while magazine SF is sail-flapping

in the doldrums there, paperback SF books are splashing ahead and selling as well as detective novels in many places.

Nor will I be the first to deny that enlarging the field will admit a score of SF-ignorant publishers and editors, to be followed immediately afterwards by a flood of SF-moronic writers producing torrents of trash. This process is self-levelling. The better returns draw in better writers (including those who have abandoned SF) and eventually the total product is improved.

This happy day will arrive only when SF draws at least the grudging attention, if not the approval of the Establishment. There are certain signs that this time is not too distant.

I don't think the Establishment should be blamed too harshly for its attitude. After all, like all established institutions, it has a tendency to be a bit conservative and suspicious of innovations. And SF certainly does gnaw away at some of its firmest foundations. Science itself has only been reluctantly and recently accepted, so the fiction of science must surely lag behind. The free and iconoclastical manner with which SF treats such hallowed institutions as the church, family, sex, warfare, the sovereign government, politicians, etc., can only produce raised eyebrows. The continued science-fictional destruction of England by water, ice, grass, dust, wind-storm, monsters, et al must surely be prejudicial. SF must struggle uphill against these handicaps to be admitted to the fold.

On the credit side is the fact that the Establishment has many parts and might be undermined and infiltrated before it could become aware of what was happening. The detective story was once in this same bad odour, before it managed to penetrate to the inner circles by the sheer attractiveness of its escapism. SF will eventually triumph by sneaking in the same way. Another entering wedge will be science itself. This is now accepted as being " all right." Holding on to its coat tails SF will penetrate a bit further. (Admittedly most SF is far from scientific, but they won't know if we don't tell them ! By the time they find out the truth they will be Readers and it will be too late to back out).

In the noble work of penetrating the Establishment and spreading the gospel we have some hearty workers. I would nominate G. P. Doherty as our best agent. His grammar school *text book*, *Aspects of Science Fiction* (John Murray) is a mind-shaper if I ever saw one. This anthology will work like

slow poison, within the body of the Establishment itself, catching the young and malleable minds and making them ours. When the wonderful day arrives and SF books are labelled as such and printed in the multiple thousands by every publisher, a statue of some sort ought to be raised to Mr. Doherty.

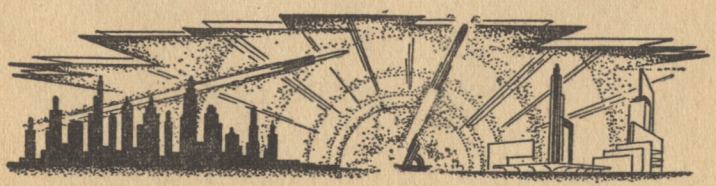
Another sturdy labourer in the vineyards is our own Kingsley Amis. Accepting him as our own is proof of the catholicity of his interests and works. Admittedly his status in the Establishment is a little shaky as they are not quite sure if he is laughing with them or at them. But at least they do take notice of him. And his impact on the higher centres of learning is surely a positive one. His cartographical book *New Maps of Hell* is a landmark on Earth itself. It is a critical book about SF, in the exact meaning of the word *critical*. And if the criticism is accepted, surely the criticized must be accepted as well ?

These are straws in the wind. Let us hope it is not a transient breeze but a mounting force, somewhat like J. G. Ballard's *Storm Wind*. The signs are good and the times are ripe. We can enumerate them. American SF is sound, and this should have some effect on the British attitude. Responsible people now accept SF as a legitimate medium of artistic endeavour, and are not ashamed to stand up and be counted. And lastly, at least one publisher is producing a labelled and regular SF series. A noteworthy list.

Perhaps . . . oh, could it just be possible . . . we *might* be admitted to the Establishment ? Too late for Wells and Bellamy and all the earlier fellows. But we—their intellectual offspring may make it yet.

Hat . . . coat . . . stick . . . Call my car . . . I'm going to the Club !

Harry Harrison



Article

ABC Television's Out Of This World

by JOHN CARNELL

The most ambitious and adult series of televised science fiction plays yet devised commences on the national network as a major viewing spot at 10 p.m. on Saturday, June 30th, when ABC Television's Drama Department present the first of 13 weekly " Out Of This World " adventures adapted from short stories by prominent authors most of which were published originally in the specialised magazine field.

The series will be hosted by celebrated English actor Boris Karloff who will introduce each of the one-hour plays and is seen in our cover photograph against a setting which will be used in the fourth play, **Imposter,** scripted by Terry Nation from Philip K. Dick's fascinating story by that title. British readers may already have seen Mr. Karloff announcing the series on Sunday, June 24th, when ABC's Drama Superviser Sydney Newman offered them a preview of things to come by screening John Wyndham's **The Dumb Martian** (a 1952 *Galaxy* story) which had originally been planned as the opening play in the series but was switched to " Armchair Theatre " as a captivating prelude. William Lucas, Ray Barrett and Hilda Schroder starred in this unusual triangle of the Martian wife who was bought as company for the lonely superintendent on way-station Jupiter IV/II.

Drama and suspense in credible science fiction settings are keynotes of the new series being produced by Leonard White, which has for a curtain raiser Leon Griffith's screen-written version of Rog Phillips' psychiatric chiller **The Yellow Pill,** directed by Jonathan Alwyn. This will be followed by one of Isaac Asimov's popular early robot stories, **Little Lost Robot,** written by Leo Lehmann, then a Clive Exton adaptation of Tom Godwin's **Cold Equations** on the third week and for the

fourth play Terry Nation's script version of Philip K. Dick's pithy short story **Imposter.**

Listed for future showing but unplaced in time as yet are **The Ape Of London** by Frank Crisp from a story by Denis Butler, **Immortality For Some** by Bill Woods from a Jim McIntosh story in *Astounding*, an original script by Terry Nation entitled **Botany Bay,** Robert Moore William's **Medicine Show** and Raymond F. Jones's **Divided We Fall,** both unscripted as yet.

The idea of a series of science fiction plays in Britain is not new—it has been mooted amongst script writers and producers connected with films, radio and television for the past twelve years. As long ago as 1951 script writers Frank Muir and Denis Norden were toying with the idea of a radio series for the BBC along the lines of the old popular " Man In Black " presentation, but like so many good ideas it was pigeon-holed by the BBC, where there can now hardly be room for the pigeons. About 1953 script writers Bob Monkhouse and Denis Goodwin —both keen science fiction readers—were toying with the idea for television (their interest can still be seen and heard in some of their current programmes) and in 1955 Warwick Films were investigating the possibilities of a series of films. One of the script writers involved in that attempt was Scottish science fiction author Jim McIntosh. Also, to my knowledge, independent TV has twice pursued the possibilities in recent years, only to be bogged down by a simple but almost insuperable obstacle. Lack of suitable material !

The barrage of protest that will develop over this statement will doubtless go as high and as fast as Glenn and Scott Carpenter did, nevertheless, the bald fact remains that science fiction material is a difficult medium to put before cameras and even more restricted when applying the close-up technique required by television. Discounting the thousands of short stories requiring impossible settings and improbable alien monsters, telepathy, galactic backgrounds and major scientific equipment not yet invented let alone designed and built (and it is surprising how many there are when you think in terms of visual presentation), suitable short stories seldom have sufficient plot material in them to make a one-hour play, while novels have too much. The list of ' possibles ' is rapidly (if somewhat laboriously) reduced, leaving mainly novelettes and a handful of short stories with a good plot line but requiring additional sub-plot material to sustain the interest and drama.

It is against this difficulty that most of the previous investigations have broken down—a series of half hour plays could be produced, cameos, in fact, lacking depth, and we have had plenty of examples of this in recent years, but not more than a dozen or so stories could ever be found suitable to form the basis of an hour-long series. Before the letters start pouring in, there is one additional hazard to take into consideration : duplication of plot in the series. Only one robot story, one time travel, one alien possession, one long-voyage, one first-trip-off-the-Earth, and so on should be permissable. As our Wellsian expert, author William F. Temple, once pointed out " There are only eight basic science fiction plots—and H. G. wrote them all !"

You can readily see why the " Keep Off " signs went up round the studios.

If you want further proof of the difficulties (and to add a time-worn cliche) ask yourself why the Americans have not yet done it successfully. Certainly with the men and material available—and might I add money—we should have seen something worthwhile by now instead of the low-grade moronic rubbish which filled the screen between 1958 and 1961. Two exceptions to the rule in America, of course. A very fine series of 30-minute plays which ran for a time two years ago and the current " Twilight Zone " weekly series on CBS, written and devised by Rod Serling. Copies of two collections of these stories (Bantam Books) have already been distributed in GB and a third is forthcoming. Read the stories and see how different the technique is to that acceptable for so long in the magazine short story field.

ABC Television's presentation of thirteen plays is therefore not only sensational but explains why the material researched covers fifteen years—and, for the record, if this series is successful, there may well be another one later. Certainly everyone at Teddington Studios from Sydney Newman down is enthusiastic over this experiment and credit must go to ABC's only woman story editor, Irene Shubik, for creating it. Miss Shubik, who has worked on documentary films in USA, has been joint story editor with Peter Luke on the highly successful " Armchair Theatre " series, and it is along the lines of the latter programme that the " Out Of This World " series has been planned—as serious adult fare.

Obtaining popular Boris Karloff as host for the series was a masterly move which should send lovers of late night grue

hastening to their sets to see what the Master of the Macabre has to offer, for, while he has played a variety of roles in films and on the stage, his reputation was made internationally as the creator of the monster in " Frankenstein," and in many famous horror films. " Out of This World " is Mr. Karloff's first direct contact with science fiction although he had a brush with the psychological fringes of the genre in 1946 when he compiled and edited that magnificent anthology *And The Darkness Falls* for The World Publishing Company of New York.

Unlike his many screen interpretations of abnormal and horrifying fictional personalities, in real life Mr. Karloff is the epitome of an English gentleman, silver haired and charming at 74 and still following his life-long passion for cricket. Thousands of older readers of the weird and macabre will welcome his debut into science fiction and his presence in the series plus his tremendous personality will play a vital part in laying the foundation for each play.

The success or failure of the entire series, however, will depend largely upon the directors and players involved and their feelings towards the new medium in which they are working. Acting and directing ability is not sufficient unless there is a *belief* in the product being packaged for mass consumption. If they can successfully get the " feel " of the future —as Boris Karloff has so successfully portrayed in the allied medium of the macabre—then the series will be a great success.

It is an incontravertible fact that the only good science fiction presented so far in films, radio, TV, books and magazines, has been fabricated by men and women who have an affinity with it—a dedication of purpose which involves authors, artists, publishers, editors, directors and script-writers alike. This " sympathetiquesness " has broken many would-be excursionists into the field over the years and will undoubtedly do so to many more.

The next thirteen weeks are therefore very crucial ones to the thousands of lovers of science fiction. Just as the big breakthrough to the mass-market of the paperbacks came during the past two years, so ABC Television's experiment with the " Out Of This World " series can be the big break-through on vision. If it is successful the genre can consider that it has successfully become of age.

Outside the Teddington television studios a lot of us are wishing ABC well.

John Carnell

ABC TV's "Out Of This World" playhouse
THE YELLOW PILL — June 30th

PAULINE YATES and NIGEL STOCK play lead roles in Leon Griffith's adaptation of Rog Phillips' short story.

Starring
NIGEL STOCK
as John Frame

RICHARD PASCO
as Michael Conner

PETER DYNELEY
as Inspector Slim

PAULINE YATES
as Helen Carter

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Directed by
JONATHAN ALWYN

A new one-hour Saturday night series which is appearing on the national network from June 30th to September 22nd

RICHARD PASCO and NIGEL STOCK in a scene from the play.

Photographs courtesy ABC Television Studios, Teddington.

ABC TV's "Out Of This World" playhouse
IMPOSTER — July 21st

Fourth play in the science fiction drama and suspense series, written by Terry Nation from Philip K. Dick's short story and directed by PETER HAMMOND

BORIS KARLOFF hosts the "OUT OF THIS WORLD" series and introduces each play.

BORIS KARLOFF jokes with the cast of IMPOSTER

l. to r.

ANGELA BROWNE,

PATRICK ALLEN,

BORIS KARLOFF,

JOHN CARSON,

JUNE SHAW and GLYN OWEN

Photographs courtesy ABC Television Studios, Teddington.