THE ORIGINAL

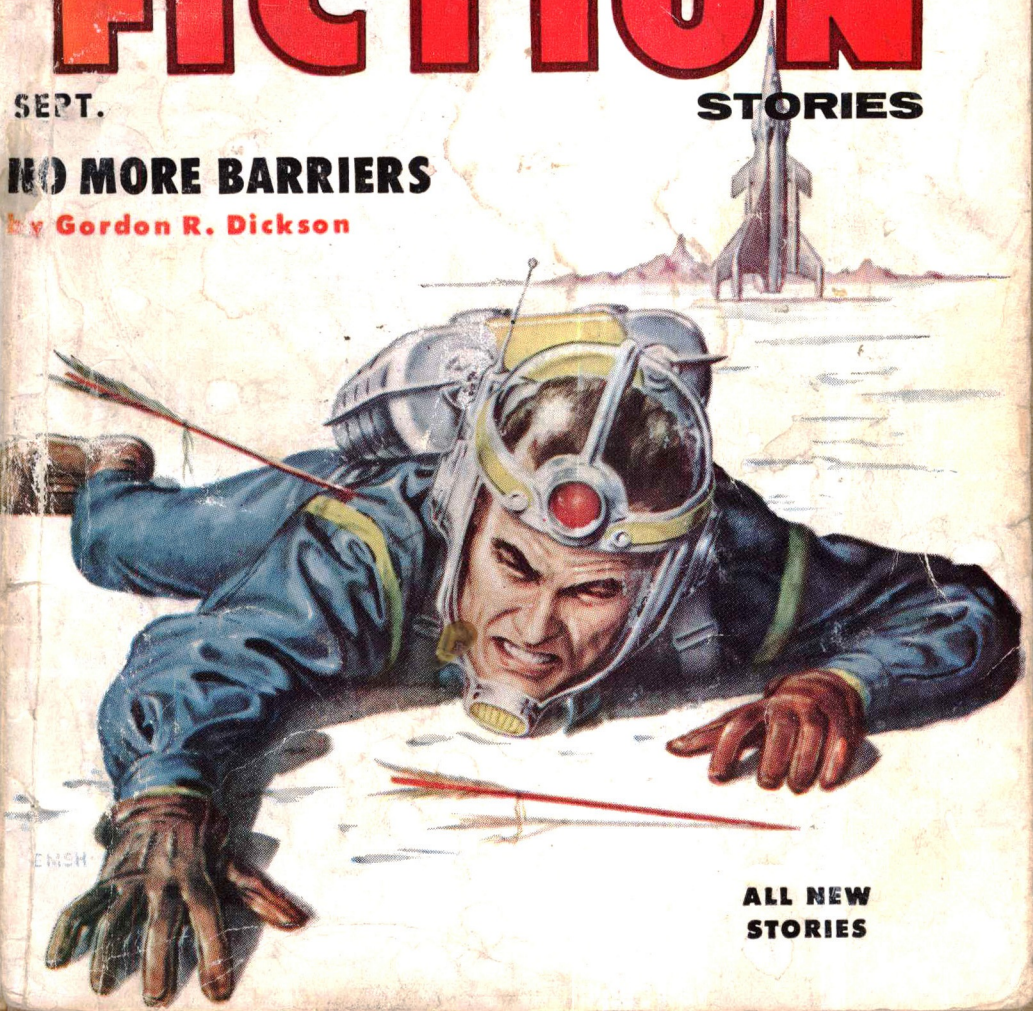
35¢ ANC.

SCIENCE FICTION

SEPT. STORIES

NO MORE BARRIERS

by Gordon R. Dickson



ALL NEW STORIES

Millions Speak ANOTHER LANGUAGE
SO CAN YOU WITH LINGUAPHONE

World's Standard Conversational Method
The Quick, Natural, EASY Method

FRENCH ● GERMAN ● JAPANESE
SPANISH (New World or European)
ITALIAN ● RUSSIAN ● MODERN GREEK
any of 32 languages available for
10 DAY FREE TRIAL

YOU Bring a foreign land into your home on modern Linguaphone Recordings—
YOU Listen—to native voices for 20 delightful, adventuresome minutes a day—
YOU Hear the world's outstanding language authorities converse in their native tongue about everyday matters with perfect accent and correct swing—
YOU Learn correctly by imitation, the same way you learned English
YOU Save—time, work, money.
YOU Gain travel, business, cultural, educational advantages
YOU—GO PLACES

Used internationally by schools, colleges, governments, armed services and business firms for personnel training. More than a million home-study students. Write today for details about our 10 Day FREE TRIAL and free book. Linguaphone Institute, T-82-095 Radio City, New York 20.

WRITE FOR FREE BOOK

LINGUAPHONE INSTITUTE
T-82-095 Radio City, N.Y. 20, N.Y.

Please send me your FREE Book about Linguaphone plus details of 10 DAY FREE TRIAL. No obligation, of course.

Language interest .....
Name .....
Address .....
City ..... Zone ..... State .....

Over 50 Years Leadership in Up-To-Date Modern Language Courses

Volume 6
Number 2

35¢

September, 1955

THE ORIGINAL SCIENCE FICTION STORIES

NOVEL

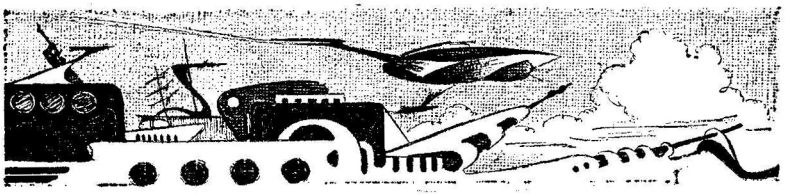
SHORT STORIES

READERS' DEPARTMENTS

Editor: ROBERT W. LOWNDES
Art Director: MILTON LUROS
COVER BY EMSH

MARIE A. PARK, Asso. Ed.
DOROTHY B. SEADOR, Asso. Ed.
Illustrations by Freas, and Orban

SCIENCE FICTION STORIES, September, 1955, published bi-monthly by COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, INC., 1 Appleton Street, Holyoke, Mass. Editorial and executive offices at 241 Church Street, New York 13, New York. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at Holyoke, Mass., under the act of March 3, 1879. 35¢ per copy; yearly subscriptions $2.10. Printed in the U. S. A.



Complete Novel

NO MORE BARRIERS

They'd reached barriers in all the physical sciences, and three courses were open to civilization. They could accept the barriers and stagnate; they could deny them and maintain the illusion of progress by meaningless activity: or they could seek new directions within man himself!

by GORDON R. DICKSON

illustrated by KELLY FREAS

A COURIER air-sub, with the coral red of the Underseas Power Group tipping its wing stubs, came driving out of the blue south sky at a little after noon. It checked, and for the short space of several minutes hung hovering above the huge floating structure that was Cable Island—seat of gov-

A lieutenant of the Neutral Guard took charge of the courier, impounded his gun, and...

ernment, and political neutral ground for the autonomous Groups—symbolically built and anchored in twelve hundred fathoms of chill sea water above the theoretical midpoint of the old Atlantic Cable. Then the Island signaled clearance; and the ship dropped gently to the landing deck. From it stepped a boy of scarcely twenty, with tousled hair and a grin above the coral-red facings on the silver cloth of his tunic. A sea-green kilt was clipped about his slim waist by a gun-belt and holster, from which a handgun with coral-red butt protruded. And an ebony-black official courier's cloak clung to the magnetic shoulder tabs of his tunic, while a courier's pouch with thumb-lock was clamped to his right forearm.

A lieutenant of the Neutral Guard took charge of him, impounded the gun, and checked him through the scanners. These mechanical watchdogs having discovered nothing dangerous either on or within the youngster, the officer turned him over to two Guards of the ranks, with instructions to conduct him to the main Council Room, and there deliver him to Eli Johnstone, the Spokesman for his Group. The two tall Guards saluted, about-faced and set off smartly, marching in step and rather hurrying the brightly-dressed young courier between them. It was, perhaps, an unnecessary display of military manners; but the five-hundred-man Neutral Guard were after all the only professional soldiers left on Earth and you could hardly blame them.

THE MAIN Council Room of Cable Island occupied the very center of the mammoth structure, being surrounded by committee rooms and these in turn surrounded by the offices of the individual Groups. Above all this was the Solar deck and the Landing deck upon which Poby Richards, the courier, had come down with his air-sub. Below it were the living quarters, recreation centers and such, while the bottom layer of the Island contained kitchens, storerooms, and machinery. A self-sufficient little unit was the Island.

The Council Room itself was a steep-sided circular amphitheater, the sides of which were arranged in three levels, and each level divided into sections to hold the representatives of each individual Group. There were sections for a hundred and twenty-eight Groups; but in practise, only about thirty of these bothered to have representatives permanently stationed on the Island, and it was un-

usual to find more than twelve Groups at business in the Council Room at any one time. The truth was that the larger Groups usually each spoke for a number of smaller ones as well—those who were in some way related to themselves—and as a result there were at this particular moment only two Spokesmen present in the amphitheater, whose Groups contained less than twenty-five million individuals. Of these two, one was the highly important Communications Group, headed by young Alan Clyde; the other the Underseas Domes Group, whose Spokesman was that same Eli Johnstone that Poby was seeking. Before the advent of Johnstone, Underseas Domes had been a mere subsidiary of the Metals Group, and was usually without representation.

Eli had built Underseas—and himself along with it—into a political factor with which to be reckoned. The Underseas cities had a unanimity of feeling that the land Groups lacked and Eli had reached out, making connections with other small Groups who needed a strong voice to speak for them on the Island. For the last five years he had been able to stand forth and match point to point with Anthony Sellars, Spokesman for the overwhelmingly large Transportation Group, generally considered to be the most powerful political personage in the world. He was the lion that Eli worried and fought, wolf-like, in the never ending battle for position among the Groups.

They sat across the amphitheater from each other now, each in his respective section, Eli nursing the knee of his bad left leg absentmindedly with both hands beneath the cover of the desk that, with his chair and himself, occupied the front of his section, walled off by waist-high partitions from the sections on either side. He was a slight, dark man in his late thirties, with a thin face early graven in bitter-humorous lines. The lines were deepened now by strain and fatigue; he sat in a half-daze of numb tiredness, listening with only half an ear to the flexible baritone of Jacques Veillain, Underspokesman for Transportation. Veillain was rehearsing the popular list of indictments against the organization presently under discussion—the philosophical researchists who called themselves Members of the Human Race, but which the easily-swayed, easily-frightened little people of the world had taken to calling the Inhumans.

"—Vivisectors and mutators," Veillain was saying to

the assembled Spokesmen and Underspokesmen, "individuals who would write us all off as outmoded ape-men, to usher in their new era of monstrosities—"

BEFORE and a little to one side of Veillain, Anthony Sellars sat immovable, his square, flat face without expression as he listened to the words of his Underspokesman. Watching, one would have thought that there was no connection between the two, that Veillain's attack on the Members was as fresh to Sellars as to the others in the Council Room; yet, as everyone present knew, Veillain was merely preparing the ground for his superior, laying down the artillery barrage precursive of Sellars' personal assault.

Eli was the last man present to be deceived by appearances; and he let his attention slip from Veillain entirely and his gaze wander along the first level of sections until he came to the Communications Section and Alan Clyde. The young Spokesman sat listening, his dark handsome face upheld on the first of his right forearm, elbow-propped on the desk, his expression thoughtful. Eli considered him carefully. Alan was brilliant and elusive. Eli had been wooing Communications for some time now, with little evidence of success.

The rest of the council, thought Eli, as he withdrew his attention from Clyde and let his gaze wander around the rest of the room, was even more badly attended than usual. Besides himself, Sellars, and Clyde, he counted only seven full Spokesmen and a scattering of Underspokesmen and aides. True, the really important representatives, like Bornhill of Atomics and Stek Howard of Metals, were where you would expect them to be—in their sections. But the great majority of the seats were empty, and some of the men present looked frankly bored.

And yet—this was at a time when political rivalry among the Groups was at its peak. Paradoxical, thought Eli, nursing his knee, but not so paradoxical at that, when you came to think of it. The Groups had outlived their usefulness; the political setup had frozen and was now beginning to mortify. Which was one of the reasons that he, at least, was getting out of it.

With the swiftness of a lifetime of practise, Johnstone buried *that* thought before it had time to linger in his mind. *Sellars*—he thought instead—*Tony. Yes, I'm sure Tony sees it, too, that the Groups can't last. Eighty*

years ago, they were a good idea. Organize the world along mutually interdependent lines, and end all possibility of war. The barriers not geographical but occupational. How could Transportation declare war on Meteorology, or Meteorology on Communications? No one cuts the rope he hangs by. But that was eighty years ago, when the old hates and prejudices still held us. Now the world is ready to act as a single unit—and Tony wants to be on top of it. That's the reason for this witch-hunt against the Members he's been pushing. Well, let him. People aren't that primitive any more—

"—and when our police broke into the laboratory, all the equipment within it was

A girl in her early twenties, and a young man scarcely older, came out to greet Eli.

found to have been melted down with thermite, and to be practically unidentifiable," Veillain was saying. "By careful reconstruction, however, it was possible to conclude that some of it had been radiation devices—"

ELI FELT a sudden tap on his shoulder. He turned his head and looked back and up into the serious, healthily-blond face of Kurt Anders, his Underspokesman. "Courier, Eli," said Kurt.

"All right," replied Johnstone. "Thanks, Kurt. Let's see him."

Kurt moved back and a scintillating combination of silver, red, green and black slipped into his place. Eli smiled. "All right, Poby; what've you got?"

"A sealed cube relayed through Dome One, Eli," whispered the boy. "Here—" and he held out the arm to which the pouch was attached.

Eli fitted his thumb into the aperture of the thumb-lock and it, recognizing his print as the one it had been set for, snapped open. Not one —but two cubes came rolling out.

Poby Richards blinked foolishly at them.

Eli looked down at the cubes and then back up at Poby curiously, juggling the little objects in the palm of his hand. Poby still gaped.

"But there was only one!" Poby protested, his face bewildered. "I know—I mean, I watched the pouch sealed myself in Dome One and it's been locked on my arm ever since." And he held out arm and pouch as if in verification.

Eli looked back at the cubes. They looked identical, but of course they would not be. For a moment he rolled them back and forth in his palm; and then his hand closed over them. "Let it ride, Poby. But go back and wait for me in my office. I'm going to want you later."

"Yes, Eli," and the courier slipped away. Kurt moved back into the vacated space.

Eli turned to the desk in front of him. In the polished black surface that winked back at him there was a slot. He turned the cubes over in his fingers until he found on one of them a mark he was expecting. He slipped this one into the slot.

There was a moment's pause, and then from the high head-rest of the chair, a voice seemed to murmur in Eli's ear. *"Eli— Everything is ready. Arthur Howell."*

Johnstone nodded. He turned his attention back to the mysterious extra cube. For several seconds he sat, turning it over before his

eyes and thinking. Then he put it, also, into the slot.

Again the pause. Then, this time, a deeper, familiar voice. *"Eli. You—"*

Swiftly but with decision, Eli stabbed at the disposal button on the desk. Before his eyes a little panel flashed back and the new voice in his ears cut off as he watched, through a shielded transparency, the two cubes tumble into a little recess where the flash of an electric arc consumed them. The small panel snapped back again; Eli drew a deep breath and released it, before turning his attention back once more to the orating Veillain.

But Veillain had just about finished. He was winding up now on a graceful note, and turning the floor over to Sellars. Eli sat up; and by an effort of will, forced the tiredness from him so that the Council room seemed to suddenly stand out sharp and bright and the people within it to take on a new solidity, as if the illumination of the amphitheater had suddenly been upped a notch. Veillain was sitting down and Tony Sellars was rising.

HE WAS a large man, but his impressiveness did not lie in size. He was, in fact, slab-bodied, with wide shoulders, but a wide waist also—wide, but flat, for there was no fat on him. And he held himself stiffly erect, so that he seemed to move all in one piece and bend, with difficulty, only at the waist, when he bent at all. His body was the big-boned, serviceable carcass of the manual laborer—what would have been called a peasant body at one time in history. His tunic, kilt, and long, official cape of Transportation blue, seemed to square him off, rather than lend him grace and dignity. He was in his late forties, with hair untouched by grey and face unlined.

"All right," he said, laying his large, capable hands palm down on the desk before him. "My Underspokesman has given you the background. Now I'll give you the rest of it."

He paused, sweeping them all with his eyes; and his gaze, like his rough-hewn body and his dominant voice, broadcast to them a sense of power and conviction that his way was right and his conclusions true.

"The Groups," he said—he had a slightly nasal overtone to his speech and the two words came out—*th' Gruopps*—"have always prided themselves on a high degree of tolerance. And for over half a century this tolerance has not been abused."

With Sellars' eyes straight upon him, Eli permitted himself the luxury of a small ironic smile. But if the Spokesman for Transportation noticed, he gave no sign of it.

"There is, however," he went on, "a point at which tolerance must give way to the dictates of common sense. Such is the present time.

"In the last twenty years we have seen the emergence of a secret society masquerading as a philosophical association. The members of this society have taken to themselves the notion that the human race, as it now is, is obsolete. They have taken it on themselves to decide we're all due to become extinct, to make way for the next generation—which will be something entirely different."

Sellars paused, and let his slow, impressive gaze sweep the room once more.

"Now that," he went on, "is a fine theory. And as long as it stays a theory, I don't mind who holds it. But these crackpots who call themselves Members of the Human Race —as if only they were, and nobody else is—have gone ahead to try and give evolution a helping hand. Their notion of this is to try hard radiation on themselves—and anyone else they can get their hands on; to dabble in every sort of dirty occult business they can dig up; and to practise gene-experimentation on their own children.

"This, alone, to my mind, is reason enough for us to get together and clean up the situation they've caused. But there's more to it than just that. I've had Veillain list you off some accounts of what's been discovered lately about these foundations and research-centers they put up; and if you listened to them carefully, you saw that they could indicate only one thing —and that is simply this. These Members—these Inhumans, as people rightly call them—are succeeding."

He stopped to let this sink in. The Council room remained silent about him; and, after a second, he went on.

"I tell you they are succeeding. The fact that I cannot at this moment produce a specimen of their 'next step in evolution' should not blind you to the fact that we have abundant indirect evidence that such specimens do exist. Fiddle around enough with the human species and you'll get some freaks. Fiddle a bit more and you'll get some dangerous freaks. Want an example?

"For two hundred years now the human race has been playing with the idea of possessing the so-called psi fac-

ulties—telepathy, telekinesis, and so on. And for thirty years the Members have been telling us that our next evolutionary step would be not a physical, but a mental one, which would enable us to possess these faculties. But for the first twenty-five of these years they were publishing regular reports about their experimentation in this field, and had so often repeated their belief in the existence of such faculties that the general public had become almost tone-deaf to that particular portion of their propaganda scale.

"Suddenly, during these last five years, the reports dwindle. The propaganda ceases; references to the psi faculties become general and vague. Why? And now that we—at least, in the Transportation Group—have begun to root them out of their dark corners, there are inexplicable instances of Members being warned of our raids ahead of time, of Members disappearing from the equivalent of locked rooms. How?"

Sellars paused once more.

"Both these things," he said slowly, "as well as a growing body of popular legend that sounds as if it might have come from the darkest of the dark ages, confirm me in my belief that the Members have succeeded in developing some thing or things, or being or beings, that are actively dangerous to the whole race as we know it today. In my mind the only solution is for us, for once, to set aside the autonomy of our individual Groups and form a single united, supreme authority to deal with this present emergency. I leave it to you."

And with that—abruptly—Sellars sat down, yielding the floor.

GLANCING swiftly around the room, Eli was aware of a shrewdness in Sellars' appeal that had particular force with this particular audience. The fight among the Groups had always been to narrow the fight—for the leaders of larger Groups to crowd out the Spokesmen of smaller Groups. And this would be a step forward. For such a supreme authority to be successful, it would have to be restricted to a few representatives, and where would those representatives be found except among the few top-ranking Group Leaders here at this moment? Stek Howard's face was frankly interested; Kurachi of Plastics had a half-dreamy, half-expectant smile on his face; and even old Bornhill's eyes were veiled and thoughtful under his grey brows.

"Idiots," growled Johnstone to himself. For a mo-

Only Tammy was there when Eli awoke...

ment he struggled with his conscience against the knowledge that this was—strictly speaking—no longer any of his business. Then, abruptly, he gave in. "Ahoy, ahoy, check!" he muttered to himself and, getting to his feet, raised his voice. "Mr. Chairman!"

Stek Howard, Chairman of the Day, came out of his pleasant abstraction and banged the gavel on his desk before him.

"Underseas," he acknowledged.

"Thank you," said Eli. All eyes in the Council Room were on him now; he smiled pleasantly at all of them, but especially at Sellars.

They all looked back at him; and not, he noticed, particularly with approval. The wealth and size of Transportation so overshadowed all of them individually, that usually their attitude showed a distrust of Sellars and a bias toward Eli—who, if nothing else, represented too small a Group to pose a serious threat to their own positions. Today, however, Sellars had dangled a juicy plum before their eyes and they did not want Eli coming along and point-

ing out that it really belonged to somebody else.

"Spokesmen and Gentlemen," said Eli. "I am surprised—in fact, I am astonished at your reaction to what you have just heard. I have sat here and listened in horror to what Transportation has just had to say; I felt assured that you had listened with horror, too. At the close of his words I could hardly restrain myself from jumping to my feet, and only held myself back because of the conviction that you, all of you would be jumping to your feet, to say, as I am saying—" and Eli turned to look at Sellars blandly in the face "—that Transportation has set forward the only possible method of dealing with this situation, and certainly I can conceive of no man more worthy or capable to head such a supreme authority."

The Council sat back, shocked, as Eli took his seat. He leaned back and whispered to Kurt. "Come on, Kurt," he concluded. "Back to the office."

Slowly, and with dignity, he got up, inclined his head to the Chairman, and led the way back and out of his section. As he went up the ramp and passed out through the exit at the top of the amphitheater, a low muttering of representative to representative across the low walls between sections broke out behind him; and he smiled to himself. He had thrown his weight in the wrong direction at the wrong time for Sellars. Now the natural suspicions of the others would fight against their cupidity. A more powerful Sellars might be risked for the increase of power they themselves would gain. But a possible Sellars-Johnstone combination? Not if they knew it.

So Eli smiled. But abruptly the smile faded, to be replaced by a scowl. "You're a damn quixotic fool," he said to himself. "Now why do you keep on doing these things?"

II

THE OFFICES belonging to Underseas formed one of the smaller suites and were well removed from even the larger committee rooms. This, combined with the fact that business was still theoretically in process in the main Council Room, led to their being deserted at this particular hour, with the single exception of a secretary at work in the outer office.

"See that we aren't disturbed, Kara," Eli Johnstone told her, as they entered the outer office and he led the way, with his swift limp across to the half-open door

that led to the inner office that was his own.

"Yes, Eli." She looked up, her dark, somewhat angular features important with a message. "Poby Richards—"

"That's all right," said Eli. "I've spoken to him, Kara."

He led the way on into the private office and shut the door. Leading the way past the half-open aperture of a sliding panel that opened on a little adjoining room fitted with couch and lavatory, he came to the large, impressively-panelled desk that was standard Spokesman furniture. The desk was equipped to do everything but measure him for a new suit of clothes; and during all the seven years of his residence in this office, he had scarcely used a tithe of the gadgets installed in it. Now, as he came up to it, he punched buttons recklessly.

A piney scent swept through the office, a murmur of woodland music crept out on the air; and the desk, like a dutiful patient sticking out his tongue for a physician, thoughtfully protruded a small but complete bar from one end of itself.

"How about a drink, Kurt?"

"Why—I suppose so," said Anders, a little surprised. It was the first time such an invitation had ever been extended to him by Eli. "I almost never—"

Eli sighed a little. "Neither do I—any more. There was a time when I never expected to run out of thirst. But it's odd—somewhere along the way I seem to have lost it. Well—" he turned brisk, "—we'll have one, anyway; the occasion calls for it."

And he proceeded to make himself busy with the materials in the bar.

Kurt chuckled. "You did a nice job."

"Nice job?" echoed Eli, looking up.

"On Tony."

"Oh, that," Eli frowned. "Kurt, you're going to have to watch out on that. I've just spiked this business temporarily—" he checked himself abruptly, and rose with two glasses in his hands, one of which he handed to Kurt. "I'm getting ahead of myself; here, take this."

Kurt accepted it, a little unskillfully.

"Well now," said Eli. "Here's to you, Kurt."

"To me?" said Kurt, surprised.

"Yes," said Eli, and took a small drink. "How'd you like to be Spokesman for Underseas?"

KURT grinned, but Johnstone did not; and gradually Kurt's grin faded. He put his glass down on the edge of the desk. "You aren't getting

out, Eli?" he said, incredulously.

"That's right," said Eli, cheerfully. "Only I call it retiring."

Kurt's face was a little pale. "You're joking."

"No, I'm not," said Eli sharply.

"But—" Kurt stumbled. "You must be. Why, you *are* Underseas, Eli; the only reason our coalition Groups stick with us is because of you."

"That's nonsense," said Eli, setting his own drink down on the desk. "They stick because of the advantages of being combined with us."

"But I couldn't ever handle them!" burst out Kurt in desperation.

"How do you know until you've tried? Besides, if you want, it won't have to be more than temporary—until the Domes appoint someone officially to replace me. I think they'd give it to you without a question if you wanted it; if you don't, they'll be able to find someone else." He looked at the stunned Underspokesman with sympathy. "But you don't know until you've tried whether you'll want it or not."

"But you, Eli—" said Kurt, looking up at him. "I can't understand—why *you* want to get out."

Eli sighed gustily, and the bitter lines in his face sharpened momentarily. "I suppose you thought the Spokesmanship was something I wanted."

"But, my God, Eli," protested Kurt, "you went after it like a house afire. No one knew you eight years ago—"

"Well, it wasn't," said Eli, watching him. "I suddenly woke up to realize that I was getting older and not doing anything. Everybody my own age had fitted into the world. I felt I had to catch up—so I went gunning for the biggest job I could find."

"And now that there's no place else to go, you're getting out?" There was accusation in Kurt's voice.

"No." Johnstone half turned from the Underspokesman, staring at the wall of the office, but not seeing it. "I went into politics because I thought I was wasting my time doing nothing; now, I think I'm wasting my time in politics. All my life I've been hunting for what I really want to do; and I've just decided to keep after it." He flicked a glance at Kurt. "Or do you think that at nearly forty I'm too old?"

"No," said Kurt, quickly. "No, but—" he hesitated, then suddenly cried out. "But it's a selfish thing to do, then!"

"Agreed," said Johnstone, cheerfully. It was the kind of merciless admission that he liked to make; and it restored his good humor. He became

conscious, suddenly of his aching knee and sat down.

"—If that's the only reason you're getting out." Having uncovered feet of clay in his idol, Kurt was in a hurry to cover them up.

"Another reason is that I think the world is headed for hell in a handbasket," said Eli. "But that needn't concern you."

"I don't understand."

"It doesn't take understanding," said Eli. "All it takes is observation. The Groups are disintegrating as a governmental system; there's no place to go but toward a completely single-unit world, and in spite of the experience of the past two thousand years we don't seem to be ready for that yet. What would *you* guess the immediate future is going to be like?"

Kurt stared at him. "Do you really believe that," he asked. "I know times are tense, now, with all this superstition about the Members—"

"Tense!" e c h o e d Eli. "Times are always tense. People are always—"

He had swung about in a half turn as he spoke, and now he suddenly halted. "Poby!"

LOOKING very embarrassed indeed, the young courier was standing in the panel entrance to the little side room of the office. Now, with Johnstone's and Anders' eyes full upon him, he faltered out into the main room. "You asked me to wait for you in your office, Eli—"

"You've been listening to all this?"

"I fell asleep on your couch in there," Poby Richards was really suffering, and at once the state of his feeling jumped the gap between him and Johnstone as if it had been a strong electric current.

"Well, in that case," he said, turning back to the bar, to hide his own reactions. "I imagine you rate a final drink, too. What'll it be?"

Poby stared at him for a moment in bewilderment. Then Johnstone's words penetrated through to him. "No, Eli," he said. "Why, I couldn't drink to that!"

Eli straightened up above the bottles and looked at him in slight a s t o n i s h m e n t. "Couldn't drink to what?"

"Couldn't drink to your leaving."

Eli stared at him. Poby turned red but stared back, defiantly. "It's not an occasion for celebrating. It's a—it's a tragedy. Millions of people count on you. If they don't have you who're they going to trust? If you leave—"

"Poby," interrupted Johnstone, dryly.

Richards stopped speaking.

"That's better," said Eli. "Now, I am not King Arthur and you are not Sir Bedivere. Thank you for your high opinion of me, though, all the same."

"But it's true!" cried Poby.

"Well, and if it were," said Eli, equably. "Have you ever heard of the right to individual happiness?"

"Oh, you'll answer whatever I say!" Poby burst out, transported beyond himself. "Because you're a master statesman. I can't talk; all I can do is tell you."

"That," said Eli, wearily, "is what is wrong with most of the people in the world at any time. We'll leave the matter at that, Poby before you and I run aground on the shoals of our mutual argument." He

Tammy's head appeared in the bubble-like, three-dimensional screen that rose from the floor.

turned to Kurt. "It's still early; and I'm going to leave right away. I'll give you a recording of my resignation and you can release it whenever you feel ready. You know all there is to know about the situation, and the position at the present time. Poby—" he swung back to the courier—"get that ship of yours ready. I want you to deliver me to a place about two hours from here."

Richards turned and went, to follow his instructions and think of all the arguments he might have used on Johnstone if they had only come to mind at the proper time. Eli waited until the youngster was out of the room. Then he turned back to Kurt. "I'll be at the University of Miami's Calayo Banks shallow water research station."

"I didn't know they had one," said Anders.

"Let's hope nobody else does. Keep that address to yourself." He looked around the office. "Well, I guess that does it—except for the resignation." He moved over to the desk and its recorder.

"You know," said Kurt, abruptly, following him. "The boy was right."

Reaching over to press the *record* button, Eli lifted his head from the desk and looked at the Underspokesman oddly.

III

THEY dropped down out of the bright sky toward the blue water.

"That's the spot, then," said Eli, peering out the window on his side of the ship.

"Yes," said Poby.

Richards was holding the air-sub as if he loved it, bringing it down in a wide sweep, gently, gently, yet swiftly onto the ocean. Below them, Eli Johnstone picked out a glinting dot on the azure expanse of the Florida waters around the tiny sterile sandspit of Calayo Bangs Cay, lost and lonely in the sea. Like a tiny bright coin dancing on the waves when he saw it first, it steadied and swelled to the transparent hemisphere of a solar roof over the top of an underwater station. Then they were landing in a fume of spray, and it swelled bubble-like above them, with the brown sea-resistant concrete of the jetty pushing out from it, lifting toward them over the chop of the waves as they taxied up to it.

When they bumped the magnetic mooring rim of the jetty and locked there, Eli stood up. Poby, reaching over him, threw back the hatch and stepped past him to turn and give him a hand from heaving air-sub to the immobile jetty. Eli had one quick glimpse

down through the clear water as he stepped across—a momentary picture of sixty feet of station reaching away and down through the fantastic clearness of the water to the white sand far below. Then he found his feet on the jetty; and turned back to Richards.

"Well, that's that, Poby."

"Yes, Eli—" the young courier looked at him rather helplessly.

Johnstone rubbed his narrow jaw thoughtfully. "What's your home Dome?" he asked. "You told me once, but I've forgotten."

"Number Three, Pacific."

"That's right," said Eli. "Well, I want you to go there for the next few weeks; or at least until Kurt makes my resignation public. If he does that, go directly to him and put yourself under his orders. You understand why I'm doing this, Poby?"

"I think so," he answered.

"I've had this planned for a long time. I've set things up so I can step out quickly and without fuss; but for the general public it can't be that sudden. Kurt is going to announce that I've gone into a surgical hospital to have my knee worked on. Only he and you know that I'm actually, as of now, no longer Spokesman. I trust you to keep the information to yourself."

"Yes, Eli."

"All right. Get me an order blank for the ship, and I'll write you a predated order for a month's leave."

Poby dived back into the air-sub and produced a small pad of order blanks on which Eli scribbled the instructions he had just given, signed it, and pressed his thumb on the sensitised signature area. He tore off the order and handed it back to Richards.

"There you are," he said; and held out his hand. Something in the other's eyes made him add: "Look me up in about a year if you still feel like it."

"I will. I'll find you."

They shook hands, and slowly Poby re-entered the air-sub, pulling the hatch closed behind him. The air-boat sparked as its motors thrust it away from the magnetic pull of the mooring ring. Then it had surged away from the jetty and was gone, leaping into the air. Johnstone stood looking after it a little sadly. Nostalgia was not one of his usual indulgences, but he let it touch him now, momentarily—for the tense, bright period of his own youth, before time had come to sit upon his wrist and tick his life away.

THE SOUND of footsteps on the jetty behind him, brought him around. A girl in

her early twenties, and a young man scarcely older, were coming from the solar deck of the station, through a water-tight, storm-tight door, flung wide to meet him. He turned, a little awkwardly, favoring his one bad leg and took them in at a glance, the tall dark man and the small, blonde girl.

The man was big-boned and young, with a big nose set a little crooked, which, however, did not spoil the general effect of his good looks. Probably there was scarcely half a dozen years difference in age between him and Poby, but this one could almost have passed as Poby Richards' father. He did not so much look old, as mature; and he had probably looked mature since he was sixteen, with rectangular, solid jaw and a stiff bristle that required shaving twice a day. But his eyes were the clear. uncynical eyes of his proper age, and a little wondering and a little kind.

With the girl it was different. About the same real age, probably as the young man, she had an ageless quality about her. Small and light-boned, with hair so light and fluffy of texture that it seemed she had despaired of bringing it to any discipline of form, so that it floated like a loose cloud about her head. Her face was pointed and fragile, with such a clearness of skin, that although she was not conventionally pretty, she struck at any moment a memorable picture for any man to carry with him afterwards. Her lips and eyes molded the visible expression of everything she said; so that from that first moment on until a long time afterward until he knew her very well, and even then, Johnstone would find himself watching one of these two features of her, as she spoke.

She spoke now, half-running forward to keep up with the long steps of the man beside her. "Eli! You were quick! I'm Tammy Wina."

"Hello, Tammy," he said, smiling, and taking the hand she gave him. She held it and turned him toward the man. "And this is Dr. Mel Bruger."

In a period in which first names were almost universally used, even on first acquaintance, Eli caught the hint of a slight sense of inferiority that his reputation had impressed on the tall young man.

"Hello, Doctor," he said; and was rewarded by a smile flashed by Tammy from behind Mel Bruger's back.

"Hello," answered Mel, shaking hands. His voice was slow and deep. "Arthur Howell and Ntoane are downstairs."

"Both doctors, also," said

Tammy—and the slyness of the remark, Eli could see, was lost on Mel.

THEY turned and went into the station, dogging the weather door shut behind them. The still air of the solar under the brilliant sun was hothouse warm. They walked across a plastic floor like polished white marble between tables and deck chairs, and entered an elevator capsule whose tube projected like a transparent sleeve up through the floor of the solar deck to about eight feet. The capsule held them easily, and they dropped with a rush of released air to the fifth level of the station, a scant dozen feet above the ocean bed.

Down the hall was the lab and the two men in it looked up as they entered. One was Arthur Howell, a thin, angular man in his fifties. The other was a sensitive-featured, black-skinned man who at first glance appeared to loom beside Howell like a giant.

"Dr. Ntoane," said Tammy, as they came up. "And you know Arthur."

At second glance, as he shook hands with the dark man with the Basuto name, Johnstone perceived that appearances had deceived him, for Ntoane was scarcely taller than himself. A trick of ideal body proportioning, however, made him appear much larger, so that he was in fact, like a giant in miniature, with a deep-cast slim-featured face and intelligent, but rather unhappy eyes.

"It's an honor to meet you, Eli," he said, in a soft, slow voice. His hand, as it grasped Eli's in handshake, was soft also, but with a nervous, sudden pressure behind it.

"Don't embarass me," said Eli, with a smile. He turned to Howell. "Well—Arthur!" He extended his hand.

"Hello," said Howell, giving Eli's hand one quick pump and then dropping it. "You made good time. That's good. What do you think of the station?"

"I think it looks excellent."

"Yes. I do too," said Howell. "Well, now that you've met everybody, come on back to my office with me; I want to talk to you. You can finish up here, Ntoane?"

"Of course, Arthur."

"Fine; this way, Eli." And, without waiting for any further parleying, He turned and began to lead the way back between the cluttered benches, sinks, and equipment of the lab. Eli, with a humorously apologetic smile at the rest, followed him.

Howell led him to an office opening off the far end of the lab. A little square cubicle of a place fitted with desk, chair, and filing cabinet. Howell,

himself, perched on the edge of the desk and waved Johnstone to the chair.

The man who had sent Eli the message cube and now sat opposite him, with the toe of one narrow foot on the ground and that of the other beating nervous time back and forth in the air, was well into his fifties. On the other hand, and in spite of this, he had all the earmarks of the indestructible type—to whom age fifty is merely a minor chronological accident, which should in no way interfere with the important things of life. Howell was, frankly, skinny. His elbows were knobby; his hair was badly gone, and his bony face was cut with lines—but the violent energy of the undergraduate was still with him. That he was abrupt and intolerant was natural, and in no way detracted from the pleasure of knowing him.

"How much time have you got?" he demanded without preamble as Eli sat down.

"As much as you need; I've resigned the Spokesmanship."

"Fine. Excellent," said Howell, rubbing his hands together pleasantly, as if it was no more than commendable that a man should throw up one of the world's leading executive positions in order to provide him with more time in which to work. "Well, I'm pretty sure we can do it."

"No more than pretty sure?" asked Eli.

"There are no hundred per cents in medicine," said Howell, didactically. "You came to me two years ago with a question as to whether the human body could not be rebuilt with new parts in pretty much the way an engine is; I'm now prepared to try and answer that question."

"On me," said Eli, wryly

"Precisely," replied Howell, utterly unconscious of any irony. "However, that needn't concern you. There were some other things I wanted to talk to you about. First, you asked me to look into the matter of your lame knee. I have; there's nothing wrong with it."

IN SPITE of himself, Johnstone was nettled. "I happen to know there is."

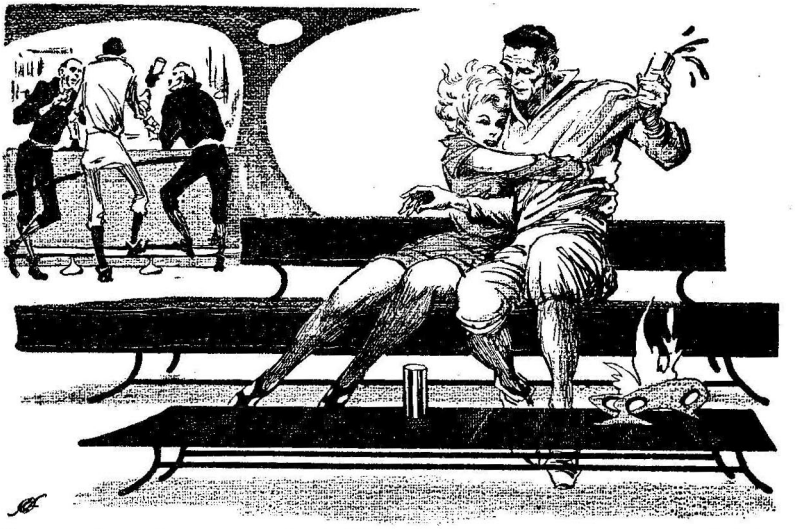
"Well, you're wrong. If it bothers you, it must be psychosomatic. See Mel. He's got his degree—"

"Is that why he's here?" demanded Eli, sharply.

"No. I need him for the operating. I'm a research man, pure and simple; I don't operate myself."

"That's good," said Eli. "Because I don't intend to see anyone in that line professionally, now or ever."

"Why not?" Howell was looking at him curiously.



Tammy threw her arms around Eli, as she sat on the couch beside him, and hugged him...

"Because its a waste of time."

"Well," Howell shrugged. "It's not my department; suit yourself. Now the first thing we need are some tests on you—"

"You've had nothing *but* tests!" protested Johnstone.

"Certain data has to be brought up to date; nothing extensive." Howell glanced at the watch on his wrist. "When did you eat last?"

Eli had to stop and think. "This morning."

"All right," said Howell. "I'll give you a short, timed dose to put you under. From that you should go into a natural sleep and we can start taking checks on you. Come along."

He led the way out through the lab, stopping en route to take a tiny green capsule from a refrigerator and pass it over to Eli. The three other people in the station had gone about their business and were nowhere to be seen. Howell led Eli out of the lab and up one level and down a hallway to a spacious room, dim-lit by the sunlight filtering down through thirty-odd feet of water and the two-foot thick pane of window glass. A wide, white bed sat on the polished floor, surrounded by banked instruments. But the rest of the room, with its couch, its

viewing screen, table and chairs, was like any good hotel room. Eli took the green capsule Howell had given him; and, after the other man had gone, lay down on the bed and let sleep claim him.

AT SOME indeterminate time later, he awoke in the darkness. For a moment, Johnstone thought that only a matter of minutes had passed and he was still alone, waiting for the drugged sleep to pull him under the surface of consciousness. Then, a soft, all-pervasive humming and the shielded glow of little signal lights from the now-operating machines about his bed disillusioned him. He lifted his head and caught a shadowy glimpse of a figure in a white tunic that moved about the machines.

"Doctor—?" he said, uncertainly.

The white-clad figure approached him. A cool hand touched his forehead. "Lie back" came Tammy's voice; "sleep, Eli."

He lay back, drowsily becoming aware of soft bands encircling wrist, bicep, thigh and throat. There was something strangely familiar and pleasant about her voice that he could not be troubled to investigate right now, but which made him want to hear it again.

"What are you doing?"

"Analysing you—" her soft tones came back to him. "Pulse, pressure, metabolic rate, and a lot of other things. Don't talk; just lie back and close your eyes. And try to sleep."

He closed his eyes and mouth. The bed was warm and he was aware of a reaching, all-encompassing comfort in the knowledge of her presence, moving about him. "Will you take care of everything?" he asked dreamily, out of the once-more encroaching billows of slumber.

"I'll take care of everything," she whispered. "Just leave everything to me. And sleep, Eli sleep."

Reassured, he loosed his troubled hold on consciousness. The darkness closed about him; and he slept.

IV

ELI DREAMED that he ran through a huge and empty city. The buildings were tall and grey and empty; and the streets were at first deserted and grey. But finally the people who lived there came in a group and surrounded him.

"You'll have to go to the city hall at once," said a man with an earnest, weary face.

"Why me?" Eli asked.

"Because you've got a mark

upon you," said the man. And they all crowded about Eli, insisting that he go.

"All right, I'll go," he said. And he started walking off by himself in the direction of the city hall. But when he was a safe distance away from them, he shouted back, "I've changed my mind!" and took to his heels again.

He lost them in the maze of streets and descended to the vehicle levels. On these he continued to wander until he came to the edge of the city. And there, on the grey, open plain, he saw that a camp was set up, like the camp of a Roman legion on the march. But when he wandered into it, he discovered that the soldiers were all of a strange alien species, neither animal nor human. And as he walked through their camp one of the officers came up to him.

"Get back to your post, soldier," the officer said.

"Oh, I'm not one of you," said Eli. "See, I'm just like your enemies, the people in the city; I even have a mark on me."

"That mark does not matter," said the officer. "It is merely the surface manifestation of a Mark that makes you one of us. Look at it."

"I don't believe in marks," said Eli; and he began to walk off, swiftly. As he went, he expected every minute to feel the officer's hand on his shoulder; but when he looked back, he saw the other still standing, staring after him. He started to run, and ran until he came out the other side of the camp into open country—which was wide and grey and covered with mist. He ran through this for a while until he realised he was lost. He sat down for a moment to rest, but then it struck him that he must keep going and find some kind of shelter. He got up and continued on through the mist until suddenly he came face to face with Mel Bruger.

"What are you doing here?" Mel asked.

"I'm looking for something," answered Eli.

"That's a common type of evasion that we often run into in psychiatry," said Mel. "What you really mean is that you're running away from something. Now, what are you running from?"

AND THEN Eli woke up. For a moment he lay still, remembering the dream and blinking. The bedroom was still about him, once more dimlit with sunlight through the water beyond the window, the machines pushed back from his bed and the tapes gone from arms and legs. He groped for the headboard of the bed and with his finger

set the artificial illumination of the room up to daylight. *I ought to remember that dream,* he thought. But already the grey unreliable substance of it was evaporating like morning fog in the sun's brightness.

He rose and dressed in the fresh tunic and kilt that somebody—probably Tammy—had laid out for him, popping the sealed, transparent packaging with an active pleasure, and shoving his discarded outfit down the incinerator slot in the far wall of the room. The colors of the new combination were rust and gold, which made it almost certain that Tammy was responsible. No other male would have presumed on so bright a choice for a man whose tastes they did not know. However, Johnstone did not mind. He was feeling a new and cheerful sense of freedom from the obligations that had held him these past years; and he went out to breakfast in the rust-shot gold of his tunic and the gold-flecked rust of his kilt without any satorial qualms.

Howell caught him at the entrance to the automat and had coffee with him while he breakfasted. They had the little room to themselves, everybody else having eaten several hours previously; and while Eli dug into his chicken pie, Howell outlined the procedures for the morning, which was to consist of some more tests of Eli in the lab.

"And what about the afternoon?" asked Eli, with a grin. "Or do I have that to myself?"

"More or less," said Howell, looking a trifle sour, for what reasons Eli could not at the moment understand.

He found out just after lunch, when the last of the p r o d d i n g , picture-taking, sticking, and slicing was finally finished up.

"All through?" said Howell, popping into the lab, where Ntoane and Tammy had been doing most of the work. "I suppose you can see him now, then."

"See whom?" asked Eli, putting his tunic back on.

"I don't know," said Howell, somewhat brusquely. "He flew in this morning in his own private flyer; his name's Seth Maguin."

Eli froze suddenly. Then, conscious that his reaction was noticable to the rest, went on mechanically, putting on his tunic. "Oh, yes; why didn't you tell me before?"

"I didn't want anything interrupting the tests," said Howell. "I don't want anything interrupting the rest of the work, either." He added significantly.

"I'll see he doesn't get in the way," Eli assured him,

quietly. "Where is he now?"

"Up on the solar deck."

"Thanks. I'll go up there right now."

AS ELI rode up on the elevator, he was conscious of a tiny sore spot on his left forearm, where a sample of skin tissue had been removed, and another on the inside of his mouth in the left cheek, from which a section of the mucous membrane had been clipped by a small, gleaming instrument in Tammy's capable fingers. He touched the sore spot in his mouth with the tip of his tongue, exploring like a child—and thought of the clean smell of Tammy's hands as she worked close to him. The same haunting familiarity which had touched him the night before at the sound of her voice, came to him again.

The capsule rose above the solar floor; and he caught sight of a lean, fine-featured man who stood awaiting him, apparently having just risen from a deck chair near the transparent wall of the dome. The mark of Berber blood was strong upon this other, in his dark skin and shiny brown hair. A dark-colored, all-weather cape was clipped to his shoulders and he stood with his hand on the back of one of the chairs and smiled at Johnstone.

Eli went toward him. "You're a damn fool, Seth," he said without preamble, as he got within speaking distance. "Sooner or later Sellars checks up on everyone who sees me. Do you want to be found out?"

"You are my brother," said Seth; "and I think you're in trouble." He held out his hand, and Eli took it. They sat down together.

"What gives you that idea?"

"That's a foolish question," answered the Seth Maguin. "As well ask me how I found you here, or how I know you didn't listen to the cube I sent you yesterday at Cable Island. As soon as you recognised my voice you destroyed it. I know these things; and you could know the equivalent of me, if you would only tear down the walls you've built up to block off that section of your mind."

"We won't go into that, again," said Eli. "After all, we're only half-brothers."

"What of it?" countered Seth. "The connection was through our father. Even he didn't know that one hot night spent in Ankhara had given him a son. No one knew we were related until the day when you and I looked at each other across a playground at the Special School in Bermuda where we'd each been sent

because of our high ratings on the aptitude tests. We looked at each other and knew. Not only I knew—you knew."

"I don't remember that far back."

"Then why do you admit the relationship now?"

"I don't—in public," replied Johnstone. "And in private—what's the difference? There's nothing to blood-relationship but an accident, lucky or not depending on how you look at it."

"It matters when there's psi ability in the blood; our mutual father had it."

"Did he?"

"I have it."

"Have you?"

"And you—"

"No," said Eli, definitely. He shook his head with sudden weariness. "I won't talk about this Seth. You're a Member and wedded to the notion; I'm not, and I don't believe in it. Now let's drop it and get to the reason you risked being brought to Sellars' attention by coming to see me."

SETH MAGUIN looked at Eli, a faint, upright line pain-drawn between the fine shadows of his dark brows. "It *is* the reason I came," he said, quietly. "What are you here for?"

"That's my business," answered Eli, levelly, meeting his half-brother eye to eye.

"Forgive me," said Seth, sadly. "But there is so much I know about you. You're free of ordinary politics now—I know that—and I'd hoped to bring you in with us."

"No!" exploded Eli, violently. "I sold my freedom for a mess of politics these last eight years and I'll never sell again—on any terms. All my life, I've tried to find the solutions of my problems in the ways other people find theirs. From now on I'll leave theirs alone, and see that I'm left alone to go as I want."

Seth shook his head. "That's impossible—for you, Eli."

"Suppose you tell me why."

"Because," said Maguin, "the world does not go that way. History will not allow it. I don't mean past history, but present history, this moment, in the way it determines the future. This moment, which is not just this moment in this one little area, but this moment the world over—with all its present, momentary happening and potentialities that those happenings imply. That is how history builds—not on a few, but on an unimaginable multitude of casual incidents."

"I don't see it interfering with me," Johnstone stated, grimly.

"It can't help but interfere," replied Seth. "Conflict is inevitable; and you are one of

the factors in the conflict, along with us, the Members, with our belief in a great future for the race, and Anthony Sellars, with his armbanded Group people who are theoretically merely qualified first-aiders—who can be called upon in any public emergency, but which we know are the core of the army he is raising against us."

Eli moved his head restlessly against the back of the deck chair. "Words," he said. "Suppositions. Rumors."

"Are they?" demanded Seth. "We happen to know at the moment that he's planning to uncover living proof of the popular rumor that credits us with having used hard radiation and gene experimentation on humans."

"I would have thought he had more brains than that; anyone with sense knows that couldn't be true."

"But Eli," said Seth, "it *is* true."

ELI TURNED and looked at him as if he had never seen him before.

"It was a possible solution," said Maguin, his dark eyes unhappy; "it had to be tried. Somewhere along the line, someone had to try it. It was before my time, back twenty or thirty years ago, and the experiments that survived are all grown up now. I couldn't have made such a decision myself, I think; but that is perhaps because I, today, know that such tactics were not the answer. But I cannot blame the ones who did it. Like we present Members, they believed that the future of the race was at stake—at stake as definitely as if a plague was sweeping the world and threatening to exterminate everyone."

"Where, in God's name do you get such a notion?" said Johnstone.

"What is characteristic of a species which has reached a point where further upward evolution is necessary?" countered Seth. "The species has reached its limits of adaptation within its present stage. It must evolve, or else."

"What is there we can't adapt to?"

"Atomic energy," said Seth. He looked at Johnstone. "Do you really want me to explain this?"

"Yes," said Eli. "I've always wondered what was behind your notions."

"All right," replied Seth. He sat for a minute as if sorting out his thoughts. "All right," he went on. "It goes like this—

"I say 'atomic energy', and you laugh because we've had atomic energy since the very beginning—for two hundred years now—and it's done

nothing but make the world a very pleasant place to live in and an easy life available to all. But this is a very superficial view.

"I would like to remind you of something that had its beginning at the same time as Atomic Theory, and that was the physics of which it was a part. There were men to be found, even in the mid-twentieth century who said that their present physics had opened up a very large room, but that its further walls could be seen; and that, barring some startlingly new discovery and the plugging of gaps here and there, that particular aspect of science was complete.

"For two hundred years there has been no startlingly new discovery, and we are finally forced to the conclusion that these men of the mid-twentieth were correct.

"Very well; we assume that physics has been completely explored—as far as human beings can explore it. What kind of situation does this leave us with?

"Among other things it leaves us without a shield against atomic energy. Down the long history of Man's development the progression has been—first a new weapon, then a defense against it; then a weapon to crack that defense, and a stronger shield; and so on. Now, for two hundred years we have been possessed of an ultimate weapon, which is the end of the line. No defense is possible—there is no more science from which to build a defense. And for two hundred years we have lived in uneasy truce, one with another. Our solution has been to be careful not to play with the fire that might burn us—but this is contrary to man's very nature. What has made him what he is has been his insistence *on* playing with the fire that might burn him. For two hundred years we have exercised a miracle of restraint. But it is no more than that; as long as the weapon remains, the problem of using it remains also.

"It must be handled and it cannot be handled. What's the answer? One—the classic response of physical evolution—would be to adapt physically, so that a human being could walk through the heart of an atomic explosion without damage. Physics denies us this, as it denies us a defense as well. Two—Man's solution, would be to think up something new in physics that would enable us to find a defense. But it seems there is nothing new. Well?"

SETH finished and sat looking at Eli. Johnstone rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"You say," said Eli, finally, "that we're at the end of the line but that we can't stop travelling. So the only thing we can do is crash?"

"Yes."

"A little late in the day to be thinking of evolution, if that's true, don't you think?"

"I'll tell you," said Maguin, slowly. "I think the evolution actually began farther back than we will ever know—before the first bomb fell. And I think that it has already taken place."

"Oh?" replied Eli. "That must be a comforting conclusion for these cripples of your experimentation."

"Eli!" protested Seth. "Be shocked if you want to by what I told you, but don't let it affect the fairness of your judgment!"

"The floor," Eli told him, "is all yours, Seth."

"You didn't give me a chance to finish. We—the Members—have reached the conclusion on the basis of forty years of work, and what evidence we can and have observed, that the psi faculties bear the same relation to the human race that human intelligence does—though not necessarily in direct ratio to intelligence. In short, everybody has them—with some people having them more than others. We know they exist—"

"I don't," interrupted Eli.

Seath stared at him, sadly.

"Now, Eli—"

That's what I said."

"Eli," said Seth, sternly. "Unless you've been willfully blinding yourself, you couldn't have lived thirty-eight years in this day and age without seeing examples of the ordinary psi qualities in action."

"I've seen parlor tricks," Eli said; "I've heard rumors. I've never been convinced."

"You out of all the world?" said Seth, with a rare note of bitterness in his voice. "The man on the street doesn't share your disbelief; even Anthony Sellars makes no bones about believing."

"I say merely I've never been *convinced*."

"The message cube I sent you, for example."

"I can think," said Eli, "of more than one way that could have been gotten into Poby's pouch without any non-physical means being involved. They range all the way from illegal hypnotic conditioning of Poby to accept a second cube while denying its existence, to some simple sleight-of-hand with the diplomatic pouch somewhere along the line."

"I assure you," said Seth, "that that cube was teleported directly from the instrument on which I recorded it to the

pouch on your courier's wrist."

Eli turned and smiled at him.

"If that's true," he said, "why bother with me? Go on and take the world."

"Because in two hundred years we have never succeeded in making any single such faculty reliable. We have men who can telepath, who can teleport, who can transmute—but not one of them can be relied on to do it to order."

"It worked with me," said Eli, with a casual wave of his hand.

"Things usually work with you," replied Seth, a shade grimly; "that's what I've tried to tell you for thirty years. We think, and I believe, that you may have the very thing we need."

"And what's that?"

SETH THREW his arms out hopelessly. "Who knows?" Then he calmed somewhat, slipping back into his normal quietness and self-possession. His slim face stared earnestly into Eli's. "The psi faculties don't seem to be a single extra talent, but a field of extra talents, among them many we can't conceive of. For example—myself."

"For example, you—" agreed Eli, goodhumoredly.

"My talent—if you want to call it that—" said Maguin, "seems to lie mainly along the line of something like intuition or insight into people and things." He rose from the deck-chair suddenly and began to pace back and forth in the sunlight pouring through the transparency of the solar roof. "Every so often, something will present itself to me—in a flash. And from then on, my certainty is so fixed that I can't even doubt that thing to myself."

"And I suppose," replied Eli, watching him move, "that you've some such intuition about me."

"Yes," said Seth, halting and looking at him. "I know—I don't think, Eli. I *know* that at this present moment in history you are the kingpin on which we all must turn—Members, Sellars, Underseas, and all the people of all the Groups anywhere."

"It's too late now, Seth," said Johnstone. "I've given up the Spokesmanship."

"I know."

"Damn it, don't give me that!" shouted Eli, suddenly starting up from his chair. "You can't know."

"I tell you I know!" Seth faced him; and for a moment his eyes lit up and his brown face was transfigured with a wild, prophetic glint. "I know—because it is my function to know—everything about you

that is necessary at this time. I am bound to you by blood and affection; I am tied to you by chance and time. In the hour approaching there is nothing that can separate us, neither space, nor time—nor death!"

For a few seconds after these last words rang out, the two of them stood silent, staring at each other. Then Eli spoke, and his voice was hard. "Another of your intuitions?" he asked, the sarcasm heavy in his voice.

Seth's face gentled and smoothed. He smiled softly at Eli. "Yes."

Eli sighed and turned away. He crossed back to his deck chair and dropped down into it again.

"You see why I can't accept anything you say, Seth," he said, wearily. "It's too wild."

SETH smiled and answered nothing. Abruptly Eli turned to the small table beside his deck chair. There was a small figurine there in snowy plastic—a Grecian maiden with a water jar on her shoulder. He picked it up and threw it suddenly on the floor, so that it bounced and rolled a dozen feet from them.

"All right!" he said, tightly; "let's see you put that back without touching it."

Seth turned his eyes on the fallen figurine. For a moment his face tightened. Then it relaxed. "I'm sorry," he said, turning back to Eli; "I can't."

Johnstone let a long breath sigh from him. "You see?" his voice was almost hopeless. He looked up at Seth. "Not that it makes any difference. Even if you were right—even if what you say was true and real, I'd still say no. What you can't understand—" he hesitated. "What nobody can seem to understand is that I'm through, now, with all the big questions. Seth, do you know what I want to do?"

"What haven't you done?" smiled Maguin. "During your twenties I remember you tried your hand at just about everything. Certainly, all of the arts, and where sciences were concerned—"

"The point was, that I was looking for what I wanted to do," interrupted Eli.

"I thought you found it in politics."

"No!" said Johnstone sharply. "And I haven't found it yet. But—" he calmed, "I've found a way to find it."

Seth said nothing, but watched him.

"I'm going to tell you why I'm here," said Eli. He rubbed the back of his hand in momentary weariness across his forehead. "I've always been running after something—you know that. This same something. And I haven't found it,

but I—I've started to run out of time."

He looked at Seth and then away again. "Well, I've found a way to gain time. If I tell you about it, I want you to keep it secret."

"If you wish."

"About two years ago," Eli went on, taking a deep breath, "I began worrying about time. I didn't care about my chronological age. What I cared about was that I still hadn't started—whatever it was I was going to do. And my body was getting steadily closer to its end—its time getting shorter every day. I got a notion and I dug up Howell—the man in charge here."

"I've heard of him somewhere before," said Seth.

"He's a good medical research man—one of the best; a little violent, but not bad. I talked my idea over with him, and using my authority as Spokesman got our captive University of Miami to award him a research grant, this station and facilities. The grant was for the development of new techniques in underwater surgery."

"The Undersea Domes would be interested in that, of course," nodded Seth.

"But that isn't what he's been doing," said Eli grimly. "What he has been doing is working out a technique to rebuild and replace the worn down parts of my body. In two years he's worked out something. If it works, my body should regenerate on a twenty-year old level."

He looked at Seth.

"It could mean virtual immortality," he concluded, almost defiantly.

Seth frowned in astonishment.

"So you see," said Eli. "I—" he hesitated. "I have my own life to lead. A man has a right—"

THE LARGE three-dimensional screen that rose like a bubble in the center of the solar floor, chimed suddenly, four dulcet notes, and the head of Tammy appeared in it, several times life size.

"Oh, there you are," she said, swiveling to face them. "We're knocking off for the cocktail break downstairs; why don't you two come down and join us?"

She smiled and disappeared. Eli got up from his chair. "Coming, Seth?"

Maguin smiled. "I'll come for the company."

They moved across the floor to the elevator capsule, the subject between them, by mutual silent agreement, laid aside for the moment. They stepped inside; and Eli thumbed the stud for fourth level.

"A pleasant station," said

Seth, as the capsule began to slip downward.

"Yes," said Eli. "I—"

He broke off suddenly. Seth looked at him.

"Nothing!" said Eli; and when he saw Seth still staring, he repeated, fiercely. "Nothing, I tell you!"

Seth let it go; and the walls of the elevator tube slipped swiftly upward, opaquely about them as they dropped. But Eli was looking through and beyond them, seeing still the momentary picture of the solar deck, seen over Seth's shoulder in the minute before the capsule dropped below its floor level. For a moment the solar had stood out before him, with deckchairs, screen and tables—and the figurine, the little Grecian maiden with the water jar in white plastic—that was no longer on the floor where Eli had thrown it and Seth had left it, but was once more upright and standing, in its position on the table from which he had picked it.

V

THE COCKTAIL break, Eli discovered, was in this instance something more than just a pleasant afternoon interlude. It was, in fact, a sort of combination celebration and send-off party, to mark not merely the conclusion of two years of preparatory work, but the beginning of the operations, since they would start getting Eli ready for the first of these directly after it. In fact, the most that was allowed *him* for celebratory purposes, was charged water; but the occasion was a cheerful one nonetheless, Eli finding himself cast in the role of garlanded sacrificial victim—*morturi te salutant*—and discovering enough wry humor in himself to enjoy the role.

Seth did not drink—out of conviction; so at least Eli had company; and also he found welcoming the opportunity to sit back and take a good look at these people whom he was counting on to do a number of rather drastic things to him and get away with it sucessfully. In this moment he thought, as he watched them and listened to the chatter, that Howell's single-minded egocentricity was reassuring rather than otherwise; the man was so certain of himself. Tammy, also—he shifted his eyes to the girl, at the moment in conversation with Seth across the room—was reassuring, for a different, almost opposed reason. She seemed the kind of person who would think of him, even when stretched out unconscious on the operating table, as another person—not as so

much flesh and bone to be tinkered with. There was comfort in Tammy, as he had noticed during the testing of the night before. A feeling of concern for him seemed to flow out from her and lap him around. It was apparent at the moment in the sensitive perception that restrained her, so that she did *not* come over and sit next to him, and make conversation.

As for Mel and Ntoane—they were the unknown quantities. Of the two, Eli thought he preferred the Basuto. There was an echo of wisdom to him that seemed to be lacking in the younger man. *Perhaps,* thought Eli, *that's what I have against Mel, the fact that he's young. But usually I like people for that reason.*

He shook his head. There was something about Mel that puzzled and disturbed, a hint of deep-buried, repudiated resentment against Eli for which there could be no reason. Johnstone thought about it; then gave up as Howell dropped unexpectedly down beside him.

"How d'you feel?" demanded Howell.

"Fine," Eli considered. "A little frightened, I suppose."

"Of the operation. Naturally," said Howell. "Avatistic fear of being hurt, of being helpless. Not afraid of dying, are you?"

"Is there any danger?"

"None," said Howell. "We'll put you under with a lytic mixture this evening; then take twenty-four hours to get your body temperature down. By that time, we'll be able to keep you on the operating table until all of the major organs are out and replaced."

"I suppose you've got the —er—substitutes ready?" asked Eli, feeling a little queasy at the notion.

"My God!" said Howell. "We've had two years to culture them; they ought to be ready."

"Oh? They're all cultures?"

"Of course." Howell peered at him. "You don't think we'd take a chance on anything out of an accident bank?"

Eli did not answer immediately. He was thinking at the moment that it might somehow perhaps be a little more friendly to think of his new heart and liver, or whatever they were going to replace, being natural-grown accessories, so to speak, than the impersonal offspring of a culture bath.

"No telling what factors we might introduce if we did that," Howell went on.

"It seems to me," protested Eli, mildly, "that I've heard of cultured body parts being refused by the body, so that—"

"Nonsense!" said Howell. "In the beginning they had a few such cases, due to incomplete knowledge of body typing. Not for twenty years now. No, no, its perfectly simple: Cut, attach mechanical standby, remove, replace, detatch mechanical, and there you are."

Eli winced. Howell, in his attempts to reassure his patient was being markedly unsuccessful.

"If you want, I can take you down to the operating room now," said Howell, "and show you the complete procedure."

"No thanks," said Eli—and as promptly as if he had run up a distress signal, Tammy and Seth came both swooping down at once to break up the conversation.

THE PARTY ran for about another half hour. At the end of that time it broke up, and Eli was conducted by Tammy to a room adjoining the operating room and put to bed in what looked like a large, quilted stretcher, with an equally thick cover of the same design that covered him completely up to his chin. Only one arm protruded, and into this, at the junction of the median basilic and median cephalic vein inside the right elbow, Tammy pushed and taped a hollow needle. From the needle a light tube ran up to a bottle hanging head downwards from a T-shaped rack beside the stretcher.

Eli Johnstone looked at the straw-colored liquid in the bottle. "That's what Arthur called the lytic mixture, isn't it?"

"That's right," Tammy smiled down at him, fastening the magnetic strip that held the edges of the top covering to the stretcher and enclosed Eli, by the simple expedient of pressing them together at the bottom and then running her pinched fingers along until their full lengths were in contact.

"What's it made of?"

"Chlorpromazine, mainly."

"What's that?" Eli wanted to know. "Something new?"

"It's been used like this for over a hundred and fifty years. You relax now."

Eli wriggled uncomfortably in his cocoon. The material that enclosed him enclosed heaviness and coolness. He was aware of the needle through which the lytic mixture was dripping into his arm, not as a pain—for a small amount of local anesthetic had been used—but as a somewhat improper weight and pressure within his flesh.

"I wish this stuff would hurry up and take effect," he growled.

"It will," said Tammy...

JOHNSTONE yawned and woke. Tammy had vanished and he looked up into the face of Ntoane. Eli blinked. "Is—it all over?" he asked. His voice sounded a little croaky and unused. He cleared his throat.

"All over," said Ntoane. "How do you feel?"

"Feel?" echoed Eli.

He became conscious, now, of the fact that his cocoon was no longer cool, but warm. Inside it, his body felt pretty much as it had always felt.

"I feel all right," he answered.

"Good," said Ntoane. He slipped the end of his thumb between the top ends of the magnetic fastening strips and ran it back along their length to separate them. "Take my hand and I'll help you get up now."

"Get up?" repeated Eli. He felt ridiculous to be parroting every word Ntoane said, but the words seemed to come out by themselves—without any authority from him.

"That's right," said Ntoane. "Here, I'll give you a hand." He slid an arm behind Eli's shoulders and helped level him into a sitting position on the edge of the stretcher-affair. As Eli bent at the waist he felt suddenly as if he had been stabbed in the body, not merely in one spot, but in several places at once.

"Help!" he gasped, grabbing at Ntoane, to stop him.

"What's the matter?"

"Something's wrong inside me—"

"Merely the incisions. In two days you won't even know there were any. Come on, up now," said a new voice and Eli looked up to see that Howell had come striding into the room, answering as he came.

"What do you mean, 'up now'?" demanded Eli, indignantly; "I feel as if I'm coming apart."

"Nonsense," said Howell; "Ignore it."

"You *will* feel better after you've moved around a bit," put in Ntoane, sympathetically.

So encouraged, Johnstone allowed Ntoane to help him to his feet and support him while he took a number of unsteady steps about the room. By the time he had completed a couple of circuits, he was sweating freely.

"That's enough," said Howell, at last. "I'll take him, Ntoane while you get a wheelchair." He put his hands firmly under Eli's armpits, holding him until Ntoane brought back the wheelchair from the corridor outside the room.

Once in the wheelchair, Eli relaxed. "Whew!" he said, wiping his forehead.

"A little difficult at first,"

admitted Howell, dryly. "Come along, Eli and I'll pick out something safe for you to eat. After that you can see your new visitor."

"New visitor?"

Howell was already moving off down the corridor. "The Spokesman for Communications," he answered. "Alan Clyde, I think his name is."

Eli's eyes narrowed. He pressed the motor button set in one arm of his wheelchair, and rolled after the thin man.

AFTER A lunch consisting mainly of liquids, Eli went hunting Clyde. He found him seated with Seth, up in the solar, leaning forward with his slim, handsome face politely attentive to the words of the Member. Both men turned and rose and Eli rolled from the elevator and approached them. "You two know each other?" he said, smiling up at them.

"We do now," said Alan, cheerfully.

"How do you feel, Eli?" asked Seth.

"A little sore about the midsection—otherwise fine," said Eli.

"Good, I'm glad," said Maguin. He glanced from Eli to the young Communications Spokesman. "I'll leave you to your own conversation, now; excuse me."

The other two nodded and watched his lean figure to the elevator and down out of sight. Then they turned back to each other.

"Sit down," said Eli.

"Thanks," Alan took a deck chair, pulling it around to face Eli. "I got your address out of Kurt. He didn't want to let me have it at first; I explained that it was something of an emergency."

"That's all right," said Eli. "You're one man I don't mind Kurt letting know. I'll ask you to keep the information to yourself, though, if you don't mind. Did he tell you anything except where I was?"

"No," answered Alan. "I couldn't get another word out of him; he seemed worried." And he looked at Eli keenly as if to surprise by this statement a reaction in the older man that would be further informative. Eli's expression, however, remained unaltered. "What's on your mind, Alan?"

"Frankly," the younger man leaned forward with his elbows on the arms of his deck chair and folded long, sinewy hands together, "I'm out horsetrading."

"That sounds interesting."

"I hope so," said Alan, bluntly. "Because I'm not going to pussyfoot around the business. It boils down to this—Tony Sellars has made Communications an offer."

"Communications—or you?"

"Myself as Communications," replied Alan. "Naturally, I can't tell you anything more about it than that it's a proposition for combining forces from now on. But you're capable of reading what you need between the lines on that."

"Well? Why come to me?"

"I haven't accepted yet. As I say, I'm out horsetrading; I thought I'd see what you had to offer."

"Officially," said Eli, cautiously, "I couldn't offer anything. Underseas, of course, would be glad to have Communications on her side."

"That's not what I'm talking about," said Alan. He leaned back in his deck chair. "Understand me, now, Eli; I'm not a cherisher of personal ambition. I'm a representative of a small, but vitally important Group who can't afford to make the wrong decision. If things were to go on as they have for the last half century, with the Groups balancing the world power between them, I'd never abandon our traditional stand of remaining unconnected with any power association of Groups. But you and I know that we're in for a change; and quite bluntly, I want to be on the winning side."

"I see," Eli looked down and rubbed his bad knee thoughtfully, from long habit "I see I'm going to have to intrust you with some further information—if you'll promise to keep this under your hat also until the official announcement is made."

"Certainly."

Eli looked up at him. "I've given up the Spokesmanship."

ALAN SAT perfectly still for a long moment, looking at him. Finally he spoke. "I don't understand."

"I've quit—retired—gotten out of the job," amplified Johnstone. "Kurt has my resignation recorded, to be made public when he feels he's r e a d y. Officially, I haven't even the right now to be discussing Underseas business with you."

Alan's c h i s e l l e d face showed bewilderment. "I still don't understand."

Eli sighed. "I never really wanted it," he said. "So—I quit. Kurt is temporarily in charge, and there's a very good chance the various Domes will confirm him in the position. I suggest you go back and talk to him."

Alan frowned. "No," he said slowly. "I don't believe I will."

"Why not?" said Eli. "You wanted Underseas on your side. And Underseas is Kurt, now."

Alan shook his head. "You evidently don't understand,

Eli," he said. "It wasn't Underseas I wanted; it's you. Without you, Underseas is just another little two-bit Group—and with even less than ordinary influence because it has no mainland connections."

"Now hold on," said Eli. "Underseas has eighteen other small Groups in coalition."

"And how many will it have once your resignation is announced?" asked Alan. "Be honest, Eli. We all know Kurt on the Island; and he's a nice fellow—but he's not even average Spokesman material. Expecting him to step into your shoes is sheer fantasy."

Mentally, Eli bit his lip. Alan's serving of unpalatable facts was undeniable. And—worse than that—it was merely a reflection of the reaction all the Group Spokesmen would be showing when the news broke.

"What I don't understand is this retirement business of yours," Alan went on. He glanced at the wheelchair. "What is it, Eli? Health?"

"No, no," said Eli wearily. "It's what I told you; I just want out."

There was a slight pause. Then Alan spoke again, with meaning. "I thought I recognized Seth Maguin," he said. "He's a Member, isn't he?"

"And I'm not conducting secret negotiations with the Members, either," said Eli. "Believe me or not, Alan; but it's simply what I tell you."

Alan shrugged and rose. "Not much point in my wasting your time further if that's the case," he said; and smiled. Then the smile vanished. "You realize what this is going to mean, don't you Eli?"

"What?"

"It means that Tony is going to have what he wants handed to him on a platter."

"Are you sure you understand him right?"

"Who understands him?" Alan shrugged. "But I know something of what he wants because he told me in making his offer."

BEHIND them at that moment, there was the slight rushing sound of displaced air as the elevator capsule rose to the top of the tube; and they turned to see Seth step from it and stride across the floor to the bubble of the three-dimensional screen.

"What is it, Seth?" asked Eli, driving his chair toward the screen. Alan turned and walked over behind him.

"You'll remember [illegible]" answered Maguin, without turning around, "that I mentioned something about living proof that was to be dug up—" Under his fingers a stud snapped and a pinpoint of color in the heart of the bubble screen bal-

looned suddenly into full representation. The three men found themselves looking down at the three bodies with their faces covered, laid out on adjoining tables in what seemed to be either a hospital or a morgue. The voice of an announcer came to them with startling clarity.

"—at approximately ten-twenty this morning. The mob had been aroused by a rumor of an illegal Member gathering in a sub-basement of the Geneva city library. By ten o'clock their excitement had reached such a pitch that they moved in a body into the library in search of the sub-basement. It was just a few minutes after that that the explosion occurred. Aside from the three bodies you are now looking at, no one was injured. Autopsies will be held, however, on these to determine if they show any physical abnormalities such as it has been suggested would be the result of illegal experimentation with gene control or hard radiation. Unofficial opinions by local medicians who have viewed the bodies hint that such physical abnormalities are probably present in all three. If this is true, then the long-standing accusation that the Members engage in—"

As if in a dream, Eli watched the slow movements of Seth Maguin and Alan Clyde as they turned to look at him. The solar shimmered and their faces seemed to float slowly toward him, growing enormously as they came. Their mouths moved but no sound came out. And in their eyes was a knowledge and a question...

"Eli—?"

"No!" shouted Eli, thrusting himself out of the chair onto his feet. "No! I can't—"

And he flung an arm up in front of his face to shut out the sight of their faces. The solar swirled about him and he fell—forward, forward into blackness.

HE OPENED his eyes out of drowsy druggedness to find himself lying on the bed in his original room, in the half-light of the sunlit water. Tammy was moving around on quiet feet.

"Tammy—" he said.

She turned from what she was doing and came over to his bed. She looked down at him strangely. "How do you feel?" Her voice was cool and soothing in the hushed room, like a grateful compress on the feverish sickness within him.

"I don't know," he told her, honestly. Then he added. "Yes, I do. I feel miserable."

"Oh, Eli!"

The abrupt pain in her cry jolted him, so that he looked

up in astonishment, to see tears in her eyes.

"Why, Tammy—"

She did not answer. And he looked at her, seeing her really now for the first time, the smooth planes of her face, the delicate, turning line of her chin, the mobile mouth and speaking eyes, all at this moment tightened and touched with pain of a love he had not suspected.

The helplessness of her went through him, sharply; and he held out his arms to her. She came to them; and he drew her down on the bed beside him. He felt the slim weight of her body pressed against him and the warm wetness of her tears against his neck. Clumsily, he reached over his one arm and gripped her gently by the shoulder, holding her to him. She cried softly, but with relief, and he lay silent, staring at the ceiling.

"How did this happen?" he said finally.

She turned her head upon the pillow, so that her face was toward him. The soft warmth of her breath came and went with her words, tickling at his ear.

"I always loved you," she said. "Even when I was a little girl."

"But you didn't know me."

"Yes. Oh yes," she said. "I did. Twelve years ago, when you were in Acapulco. You were living in one of the beach additions at the Montferrato. And we were in the addition, two doors down. You remember."

Eli let his mind roll back through time to the years of his purposeless wandering, to his twenties. There had been interludes at many places; and yes—there had been a time at Acapulco. It was when he had been dabbling with painting, and he had gone down there for the sunlight and the ocean. He remembered, now, the beach additions to the sprawling Hotel Monteferrato, the morning sunlight bright upon their solar roofs. And there had been a Dr. Wina, a short, round bearded man whose hobby was marine biology. Dr. Wina. His wife—a tall placid woman, blonde like Tammy. And a twelve-year old daughter.

"Was that you?" he asked the ceiling, incredulously.

"You do remember me," she answered.

The little girl had hiked with him on Hornos Beach in the early morning, before the crowd arrived. He remembered the long, narrowing curve of the wet sand arcing away ahead of them. Sand so white and water so blue that they looked like the overcoloring of a travel advertise-

ment. There had been two months or so of that, before his restlessness drove him on.

"You'll forget me," the little girl had said.

"No, I won't."

So he had reassured her.

"I remember," he said now, lying on the bed. "Twelve years, though; and all the time you were growing up."

"I didn't forget. And when you went into politics, I followed everything you did. I kept waiting for you to marry and settle down. But you never did. Why didn't you, Eli?"

"I don't know," he frowned at the ceiling. "There were so many other things..."

"I watched you on the screens. I never missed a time that you spoke. Dad knew Howell, and when you planned this—"

"Yes," said Eli, gently.

They fell silent together. After a while she kissed him; and then left him. But Eli did not move; he stayed where he was, lying on his back, staring at the ceiling, and thinking.

VI

ELI SAID, "No. No reflection on you, Mel. And I'm sorry, Arthur. But we'll stick to the physical side alone, and that's final."

"What if you fold up like that again?" demanded Howell. He turned to the young man beside him. "Talk some sense into him, Mel."

The big young man looked helpless. "Eli—" he began without a great deal of optimism.

"No," said Eli. He pushed himself upright, wincing at the soreness of his still-painful incisions and swung his legs over the edge of the bed. "I'm sorry, gentlemen, but no psychiatry. And now I'd like to get up. Unless—" he looked at Howell, "you've got some reasons against it?"

"No," scowled Howell. "I want you to get up; but I want you to take care of yourself, too, dammit!"

"Then that's settled." Eli reached for his clothes. "What's next on the schedule for me?"

"Trigger chemicals." Howell was looking hard at him. "Come on down to the lab, and Ntoane'll fill you up with the ones for today. Can you walk?"

"I'll try."

It was not easy. The incisions still hurt him; but Johnstone found that by going slowly and hanging on to things, he could travel all right. Mel left him at the entrance to his room, but Howell followed along and stood over him as Ntoane made the injections.

"I wonder," said Howell,

when these were over, "if you realize, Eli, just how drastic and important the changes are we've made in you?"

"Tell me."

"No point to it," said Howell. "I doubt if a single listing of changes would impress you. But the point I want to make is that you probably still consider yourself to be the same man you've always been; and you're not."

"I hope not," grinned Eli.

"It's nothing to joke about!" Howell flared. "You're in a medical no-man's-land now. Any sort of development is to be expected."

"I read you loud and clear," said Eli. It was the bitter, jibing sort of humor that came on him occasionally, when he was being pushed too far. "And now I think I'll go up to the solar."

He turned away. Howell, his eyes glittering with anger, took a step after him.

"Arthur—" said Ntoane, pleadingly.

Howell stopped.

ON HIS WAY up in the elevator, Eli found opportunity to regret his unfairness to Howell. The fault might lie with the older man, but that did not excuse Eli to himself. He knew what Howell's nature was before he committed himself to this business of bodily reconstruction. It was not in Howell to yield the importance of his work to any other thing or person. Eli, who could adapt, told himself that it was therefore up to him to take the initiative.

But no poking around in his mind. No—not now or ever. This was no casual psychosis which had walled off one whole section of himself; but one consciously won by hard dint of agony and long effort. It was over twenty years ago that he had slipped the last block into place, *requiescat in pace*, but there was no resting in peace for it, *for the love of God, Montressor!*— it was part of him and would not die, though buried and forgotten. Yes, forgotten; and he could not remember now what it truly was; but he could remember that he must not remember, for hell is this, to be conscious of suffering and helpless before it—

Stop it!

"Eli—"

He looked. He was standing in the solar with Tammy in front of him.

"Eli—" she came toward him, with a gentle smile, "you came out of the elevator as if you didn't even see me!"

"With my head in the clouds," said Eli, smiling at her. "I was making plans for the future."

She looked shy and changed

the subject. "How do you feel?"

"Fine," he told her. "Except for the incisions." He reached a deck chair half-way across the solar and sank into it gratefully. "Where's Alan Clyde?"

She sat down opposite him. "He left, Eli."

"And Seth?"

She sobered, looking at him. "He left too, Eli."

"Well, that's too bad," he said. "I haven't seen him for some years; I was looking forward to having some more time to talk to him."

She looked down at the floor. "Does it make much difference?" she asked in a low voice.

He peered at her, with puzzlement. "Does what make much difference?" he asked.

"That you didn't have more chance to talk to him."

"Oh?" said Eli. "Well, I suppose it doesn't make too much difference. Why?"

"Then you didn't turn on the screen in your room!" Tammy looked up with sudden gladness on her face. "I thought you'd heard, but you were pretending to ignore it."

"Ignore what?"

Instead of answering, she jumped to her feet and pulled his chair around so that he faced the solar's screen, just a few feet in the center of the floor. Then she stepped across and turned the screen on. The image of an announcer at his desk took form in the bubble.

"It started yesterday," she said.

The announcer's voice came clearly to them.

"—and in other large cities the story remains the same. All known centers of Member activity, all hospitals, foundations, and laboratories have been raided by impromptu citizens associations. In some cases the civil or local Group authority has attempted to give sanctuary to known Members, and this has resulted in fighting between local people—"

"What's this?" snapped Eli, turning on Tammy.

"That first raid on the Members in Geneva City," said Tammy. "That was the beginning. All at once, it began to happen in other cities. Clyde left right away—"

"—Spokesmen of all Groups are attempting to restore order. Some cities have been blacked out so that we do not know what is taking place there now. Indications are that full scale riots are in progress in these localities. Among those about which we have no information are the cities of Paris, Rio de Janeiro, Prague, Belfast, Ireland, and most of the Atlantic seaboard of North America. In other localities, provisional local

governments are being set up to prevent looting and other criminal disorder; and various organizations, in particular the Transportation people qualified for first-aid and assistance armbands, have been particularly helpful. At present—"

"Turn it off!" said Eli, speaking through tight-clenched teeth. He was frozen in his chair, as rigid as if he had been suddenly paralyzed. Only when Tammy jumped to obey and the picture dwinded and disappeared, did he let go of himself, almost collapsing in his seat.

"Oh, Eli. Eli!" She was on her knees beside the chair, trying to still his head where it rolled back and forth in agony against the top of the chairback. "I didn't know; I didn't know!"

Sweat was pouring down his face. "I'll be all right—" he gasped. "Get—get me a drink."

Sleekly humped against the floor, a tiny modernistic bar squatted beside the elevator shaft. Tammy ran to it and returned with a glass half-full. He choked on it but got it down; and then slumped back, letting the tumbler fall from his hand.

SLOWLY the lines of his face relaxed their lines of twisted pain, and a little color came back to his skin. He began to breathe easier. Tenderly, Tammy wiped the perspiration from his face and waited.

Finally he heaved a great sigh. "That's all right," he said. "I'm all right now."

"I'm sorry, Eli; oh, I'm so sorry."

"Not your fault," he said, "How were you to know anything about me? Took me by surprise, too."

"But what was it?" she asked, sinking down on a hassock beside his chair and taking his cold hands in hers. He did not look at her.

"Nothing," he said. "Nothing. Sometimes things bother me." He was silent for a moment; then he spoke again. "Seth went, you say?"

"As soon as the news reports began to get bad. He—he told me you two were related, Eli."

Johnstone looked at her with such sudden horror that she shrunk back. "Eli!" she trembled. "Why—what kind of a secret is it?"

On the arm of his chair Eli's hand curled into a fist and he fought himself back into self-possession. "No one," he said, "ever knew but the two of us, before."

"But I don't understand."

Eli drew a deep breath. "I'll tell you," he said. He looked

away from her. "My father himself never knew Seth was his son. I never suspected that I had a brother; I thought I was an only child."

He hesitated, then went on. "I was an odd child," he went on painfully. "Things bothered me, and I couldn't seem to make anybody understand why—ordinary things, that didn't bother other people. Once, for example, when I was very young, I remember I'd picked up the notion that if I tried hard enough, I could talk to animals. And I tried hard for a long time without getting any place, so I finally asked my father about it. I think—" he hesitated—"if I remember correctly, I asked him to send me to a man who'd teach me how to speak to animals, like the man who was teaching me to play the violin. And he told me—" Eli smiled a little bleakly "—in a very kindly way, of course, that no one knew how to talk to animals. And when he told me I never would be able to talk to a single creature except another human, I thought I couldn't bear it. All the living things that moved and felt, and would never be able to tell me how it was."

Tammy laid her cheek against the back of his hand where it lay on the arm of the chair. Eli went on talking over her head.

"And as I grew older," he said, "it got worse; because I couldn't explain to other people. Everything that lived had some power to touch me. When the growing things budded in the spring, I woke with them, and during the long summer as they grew, I grew with them, and in the fall the pride of their maturity was my pride, so that the coming of winter was like, like one last flaming great and glorious battle with honorable death. My longing went down with the salmon to the ocean; and never got free again, for whale and diatom held it tight to them. In the end, there was nothing with life in it that I wasn't compelled to feel my kinship with."

Johnstone stopped and sighed. "And then, as I grew up," he went on, "I began to be aware of people—"

He stopped. Tammy lifted her face looked at him.

"This," he said, "is the part I cannot explain, never explain, to anyone. I can say I started to feel for them, too, and that's all I can say; from this point on, there are no words."

He stopped again, and was silent for so long, that Tammy spoke up, gently. "But what about Seth?"

"Oh yes—Seth," he took up his story again. "You see, I

didn't have any person I could get this across to—all this that bothered me. So, when I was very young, I first started to make up an imaginary friend, who would understand, without my telling him. I got to know my imaginary friend very well; and he grew in my mind until he had a personality of his own, until he was a real person, with his own problems, that only *I* understood."

HE PAUSED and looked at Tammy.

"And then when I was fourteen, my high aptitude rating on the General Tests allowed me to be sent to the School for Special Intelligences on Bermuda. And there my imaginary friend and I came face to face, and he was Seth."

"And had he—" said Tammy.

Eli nodded. "I had been his, too. When we put our minds together at last, we discovered a great many things, among them that we were half-brothers—"

"But how did you find that out?"

"It became obvious to us," answered Eli; "I can't explain."

"And then—" prompted Tammy.

"And then?"

"What happened to the two of you, Eli," she said, finally.

"Oh," said Eli; "we went different ways."

Tammy looked up at him; but with that one flat statement, his face was set in unyielding lines. "He thinks a lot of you, Eli," she said, finally. Johnstone looked away, out through the transparency of the solar roof, out over the blue waves to the horizon.

"When he left," Tammy went on, "he left a letter for you."

Eli's head came around suddenly, surprise on his face. "A letter?"

"Yes." Tammy looked troubled and uncertain. "He said to give it to you when I thought it was the right time. I don't know if it's the right time now, or not. Is it, Eli?"

"I don't know," he answered. "Let me see it."

She got up and went over to a table in the solar. From a drawer beneath its polished top she took a single sheet of folded plastic which she handed to him. At the touch of his fingers, it unfolded. He sat, staring blankly at it.

"I'll go downstairs," said Tammy softly. "I'll see you later." She touched his shoulder lightly with her fingers, and went.

Left alone, Eli looked at the letter and read it.

Dear Eli:

I had hoped to talk to

you once more before I left, but there's no time. I write these words instead of leaving my message otherwise, because I would like to leave you something lasting and concrete of myself, and this is all there is to leave.

I'm sorry that our paths of life have differed. Had we been born in a different time, you and I, there might have been a job where we could have worked shoulder to shoulder. But there is no point to regret where greater things persist. For a moment, a few days back, my faith in you wavered. It no longer does. I cannot see the future, but I trust in it—and you.

Seth

Eli carefully refolded the letter; and laid it on the small round coffee table next to his chair, aside.

"*I will not,*" he said, slowly and clearly to the empty solar.

VII

DURING the busy days that followed, the station, with its four men and one woman went about their business of rebuilding Eli's body in the same atmosphere of spurious peace that characterizes a small chip bobbing in the sheltered backeddy of a rock, while the main torrent of a river at full flood smashes unstoppably by just a few feet away. It was, in fact, a moment of historical upheaval and revolution—a convulsion of the race such had never been possible to it before, because never before had all people on the face of the globe been interconnected and interrelated in what was, for practical purposes, a single society.

The reasons for this were twofold. First the establishment of the Groups, with their announced purpose of destroying the old sectionalism that had given rise to so much conflict, had inevitably had a much greater effect on the minds of men and women than their founders had originally intended. The intention was to replace an outmoded system with a new and more practical one; the reality was that the death-knell of all systems that attempted to divide the race arbitrarily, was sounded.

For the eyes of the average human were thereby opened to the fact that the world was not naturally in bits and parts which could be assembled to make a whole; but rather an

original whole which could be otherwise divided to suit, as you cut up a pie. And almost at once the foolishness of cutting it up at all became apparent.

Yet the Groups endured for eighty years from the first moment of their establishment and mutual recognition. And the reasons for this formed the subsidiary reasons for the present chaos. First, people were used to some kind of organization. Fear of the stranger still remained a historical habit in a little back corner of many minds and, like most habits, it sought its own justification by demanding a classification into which strangers could be placed. Secondly, though the dynamics of historical progress had been accelerating steadily through the passage of all known time, some years were still required for any universal change to gather enough momentum to overcome the natural inertia of things-as-they-are.

For the Groups it took eighty years, which is very good time indeed, when compared with the parallel period of the Dark Ages.

But there was the other, second, reason of major importance—a social and emotional one. The society that emerged from the twenty-first century can be compared to the bloom of a plant that finally stops growing and directs its energy to flowering. With the peaceful harnessing of atomic energy, and the refinements and developments built upon the sturdy substructure of scientific and other discoveries of the previous centuries, there emerged an everyday existence for the average person that can only be described as free—and easy. Population was stabilised; power was unlimited; and necessity had almost ceased to be a driving factor in life.

The result was that, once the second and third generations had accustomed themselves to the novelty of a practical utopia, the lack of a progressive drive began to be noticed. The people of Eli and Tammy's generations found themselves both bored and uncertain in a time when old truths had been rendered obsolete, and new ones had yet to take their place. The restless energy that had brought the race up from prehistoric primitive savagery, dammed up, sought for an outlet. Finding nothing it turned on itself, the beast-instinct that was still a part of man, blindly recognizing man's unhappiness—and blindly seeking a physical cause of that unhappiness to blame and battle.

Thus the world was a load-

ed bomb to which Sellars' pogrom against the Members provided the arming device.

Starting first in the crowded cities, and then spreading like fire in dry grass to the smaller towns and countrysides, fanned by the discontent and soul-sickness of man, the latest and greatest witch-hunt of the human race wrapped the globe in flame and violence. From the few simple original indictments against the Members sprang a veritable Pandora's box of accusations and superstitions. All the ancient monsters of folktale and legend came alive again in the name of Members. They were warlocks, h a g w i v e s, vampires. They were satanists, voodoo-workers, Frankensteins. Does your neighbor act strangely? Perhaps he is a Member, or a Member changeling. Or perhaps his mind, his soul has been possessed by the members. Or still and yet, perhaps he is no man at all—but a clever mechanical imitation.

And where were the men of sense? They were there; they were many; they were in the majority. But how many individuals does it take to cause a panic in a crowded theater? How many to start an army retreating on the battlefield? If one man runs amok on a crowded street, how many others flee? How many reach for weapons?

Only in the backwaters like the station containing Eli Johnstone was there sanity and peace. And while Paris burned and Calcutta mobs tore suspects limb from limb, Eli underwent another operation.

THE FIRST operation had been concerned with large body repairs and the replacement of a few major organs. This second was a relatively minor affair which can perhaps best be described as a tinkering with several of the more obscure glands. It was neither as extensive, nor as difficult—though possibly a shade more delicate—than the first; and Eli came out of it in short order to find himself feeling very close to normal.

He spent his days recuperating up in the solar, in Tammy's company. Between the two of them, an unspoken agreement of intention seemed to have established itself; and Eli found himself, to his amusement and his own quietly intense suprise, literally falling in love. He found also, in this new emotion—that he had come to disbelieve in many years before, and now rediscovered with curiosity—a welcome excuse to ignore what was presently taking place in the outside world and

to concentrate on such relatively minor things as his own recovery from the operations, and the reactions of Mel Bruger.

This unfortunate young man, it became finally apparent, had fallen hopelessly in love with Tammy at the moment at which she had first appeared at the station, some eight months before. And, in spite of the fact that she had then, as now, been completely dedicated to the worship of Eli, had continued to torture himself by remaining at the station and working himself foolish on the behalf of his elder rival. It was a sort of romantic casting of himself upon the spearpoint that appealed to a type of young and gloomy temperament; and Eli was faintly appalled to find that he, himself, had a good deal more sympathy for Mel than did Tammy, who was inclined to laugh at the tall medician.

The other two men that made up the station's complement seemed both aware and unconcerned with the situation, Ntoane's reaction being one of polite acceptance, and Howell's one of somewhat grim amusement. Altogether, Johnstone floated at the midpoint of four points of view concerning himself; and examined and reacted to these emotional vectors with the same sort of minute sensitivity with which he had formerly held his position among the political heads of the globe.

So he occupied himself, while his body mended and changed. But deeply as he buried himself, it was not possible for him to ignore a general knowledge of how outside affairs were progressing. A certain little portion of his consciousness remained sandpapered-sensitive to the world he had withdrawn from; and although he never listened to news broadcasts himself, he couldn't keep himself from picking up stray remarks of the others concerning it and building from these, against his will, the overall picture of what was happening.

He knew, for example, that the Underseas Domes, alone of the world, had held aloof from the general hysteria, evidently protected by their submarine insularity, and that they were at the present, jammed and overcrowded by refugees from the disordered cities of the land. He knew that the rioting was generally being brought under control; that the Groups were, for all practical purposes, dead as effective organizations; and that the people controlled by Sellars, spearheaded by his armbanded Transportation Members and moving in under

the guise of relief organizations and temporary local authorities, were being slanted in Sellars' favor, which was clear indication that Clyde and the Communications Group had, indeed, gone over to the winning side.

SUCH A STATE of affairs could, of course, have only one end. It was reached on the morning that Eli walked into the automat for breakfast and found the others violently in discussion—a discussion that cut off abruptly at his entrance.

"What's this?" asked Eli.

He looked from Howell, to Tammy, to Mel. For a moment nobody answered anything; and then Howell spoke. "They're setting up a Central Headquarters to replace Group authority," he said, a little sardonically. "There was a broadcast by spokesman Sellars asking Group authorities to meet at Cable Island to arrange it."

"Ah," said Eli. For a minute, he stood silent, looking at them. Then he turned toward the coffee dispenser. "Looks like I got out of the job just in time."

He took his coffee over to the table and sat down.

"Did you?" asked Howell.

"Did I what?"

"Did you actually get out?"

Eli looked at him. "I don't think I'll bother to answer that," he said carefully.

Howell waved his hand, no whit abashed. "There's been no announcement from the Domes. I thought I'd make sure. I don't want you dashing off to Cable Island just yet."

"Rest easy," said Eli, and drank from his coffee cup.

"When you get through here," Howell went on, "come back to the lab; I want to check you over again."

Eli nodded and the conversation once more became general. As he followed his coffee with breakfast, eating and listening, he learned that the broadcast by Sellars had come in the small hours of the morning from Cable Island, timed as nearly as possible to hit the whole of the globe during the daylight hours. The meeting was scheduled for the soonest possible moment after the necessary representatives of the now nonfuctioning Groups could be gathered together.

Eli finished his breakfast, nodded to Ntoane and Mel, smiled at Tammy, and went off with Howell to the lab. There, the lean medician took samples and went over the surface of Eli's body with an epithelioscope.

"All right," he said, flip-

ping back his head screen at last. "There's no doubt about it now; you're regenerating."

"Regenerating?" echoed Eli blankly, and stared at the older man for a second before the word penetrated. "Oh, regenerating."

It was the moment of climax, the second of triumph for both of them; and yet, somehow, almost it seemed, unfairly, the occasion had crept up on them so naturally that they could not at first react.

"Well, that's fine," said Eli, finally, reaching for his tunic; "I suppose this calls for a celebration."

"I suppose so," said Howell. He looked at Eli, and abruptly he began to smile. The smile broadened, as Eli, catching on to the humor of the situation began to smile back, until finally it broke into a rare bellow of laughter in which Eli found himself joining.

"The trouble with us," said Howell, finally, when they had done laughing, "is that we're getting old. Come on; let's break the news to the ones who're young enough to appreciate it."

And he led the way out of the lab. Johnstone followed, wondering a little uncomfortably if his age had really atrophied him to the extent Howell had implied.

THIS WAS the second party centering around Eli at the station. It differed from the first mainly in that Seth Maguin was not present, and that Eli was now allowed alcohol. And of course he discovered, as he had been discovering for the past half-dozen years, that once it was available he didn't want it anyway. He drank several mixed drinks, in spite of this, so as not to spoil the spirit of the occasion.

"Aren't you *happy*, Eli!" cried Tammy, running him to earth finally and pinning him down in one corner of the lounge.

"Of course I am!"

"But you aren't bubbling," she protested.

"Sorry," said Eli. "I'm just out of practise."

The three other men were clustered in technical discussion around the bar at the far end of the room. Tammy threw her arms around Eli as she sat on a couch beside him and hugged him, briefly and fiercely. "You will get in practise!"

"Of course I will," answered Eli. He smiled at her to make her happy.

"Where will we go?" said Tammy. It was something they had discussed before, but Tammy liked to talk about it.

"Anywhere. Someplace small."

"And we'll stay for how long?"

"As long as you want."

"*We* want."

"We want."

"And then what?"

"And then we'll find work to do someplace and go there and settle down."

"And whenever either one of us starts to get old, we'll have ourselves rebuilt again and so we'll live forev—oh, Eli!" She clung suddenly to his arm and her face tightened with a deep-buried fear. "You will, won't you?"

This was not according to the script; and it touched off a sudden small flare of irritation inside Eli, which he immediately smothered. "Of course," he soothed. "Of course."

And with that he put his mind to it; and built a fantasy future for them that carried Tammy clear out of her apprehensions and into clear, unsullied excitement and joy. And the effort transported him along with her, so that he began to enjoy his drinks. So that, within what seemed quite a short time after all, they were all somewhat tight and gathered in a close knot at the end of the bar and singing.

THE CHIMING tones of the station's message-center, coming over the lounge's annunciator, broke in on their hubub. Howell leaned across the bar and flipped the stud on the room screen. "Yes?"

The voice of the mechanical operator came d u l c e t l y through to them. "Person to person for Eli Johnstone from Dome One."

"Oh," said Eli, putting down his glass. "I'll be right there." He saw Tammy looking at him, again with apprehension, and smiled at her. "Be right back," he said, and walked out into the hall.

As the soundproof baffles of the lounge entrance cut off the noise behind him, it came home to him that he was really more than a little under the influence of the drinks he had had. He stopped for a second and leaned against the wall to collect himself. Then he went on to the message center, a little room on the same floor with a two-way, three-quarter size screen.

He sat down in the operators chair and snapped his c a l l - s t u d. Kurt Anders swelled from a pin-point on the screen before him. The young Underspokesman was h a g g a r d and thin-looking. His eyes were staring and dark with strain. "Eli!"

"Hello Kurt," Eli answered, keeping his voice carefully even. "What's on your mind?"

"Eli—" said Kurt again. There was a despair in his

voice that touched Eli in spite of himself. He steeled himself against the weakness. "Eli, you've got to come back!"

"No." The word came automatically from his lips, the long-thought-out response that was the victory note of many self-battles.

"Eli, don't say no like that. Listen—"

"All right," he said. "I'll listen." And he leaned forward with his elbows on the control board, gazing into Kurt's face on the screen and wishing he had not the drinks inside him that he had, so that his mind could move swiftly and unclogged.

"Sellars is wrecking the Groups."

Eli nodded, "I know."

"We've held out—" the younger man's voice almost broke, "here at the Domes, because the people were all expecting you to come back."

"That's your fault," said Eli, quietly. There was an unpleasant, metallic taste in his mouth from the drinks; "you should have published my resignation earlier."

"But there's been no chance!" protested Kurt. "It's been one crisis after another."

Eli looked at him, remembering what Clyde had said about the Underspokesman—*we all like him—but not Spokeman material—let alone fill your shoes, Eli—*

"You know that's what politics is, Kurt," he said; "one crisis after another. The only difference is in the order of magnitude of the crisis." Abruptly he was tired of this fencing around. "You know why you didn't publish the resignation, Kurt," he said. "You were hoping I'd be back."

Kurt's face sagged. "Yes."

"You should know by this time that when I do something I stick to it," said Eli. He sat looking into the hopeless face in front of him, feeling sorry for Kurt, and wondering what to say. "Look," he went on, finally, "you think that if I came back, I could pull a rabbit out of the hat for you. Well, I couldn't. You can do anything you want with history but turn the clock back. Remember I told you the world was going to hell in a handbasket? Well, this is it; it's just come along a little faster than I expected."

"Has it?" said Kurt. "Has it?"

"What do you mean by that?"

Kurt's face was tight. "You didn't by any chance know this was going to happen, did you?" demanded Kurt. "You didn't by any chance sell out to Sellars, and that's the reason for your resignation?"

Eli looked at him and drew

a deep breath. "Kurt," he said, "I'm sorry for you."

And he cut off the connection. For a moment he sat, gazing at the blank screen. Then the chime of the operator calling rang once more through the station and he reached over to shut the sound off. There was left nothing but a signal calling light winking whitely and mutely on the control panel. He got up and went back to the party.

Tammy slipped to his side the moment he came back through the lounge entrance. "What was it?"

"Just Kurt wanting me back," he said. "I told him no." He slipped an arm around her. "Let's have another drink."

VIII

ELI WOKE suddenly; and without warning, sitting bolt upright in his bed. "What happened?" he said, aloud.

Nobody answered: there was nobody in the room.

For a moment he continued to sit there. What had happened? What was he doing in bed? There had been the party yesterday and it had lasted until evening and he had drunk a good deal and then—

"Did I get that drunk?" he asked himself; and realized immediately that that was not what was troubling him. It was not just that he had drunk too much, and could not remember how the evening had ended. Something had happened last night that he could not remember. And something else had awakened him suddenly, just now.

What was the matter with him? He was not drunk now; in fact he was oddly clear-headed—almost feverishly bright and awake. His mind seemed to be working at a tremendous pace on something he could not understand. He jumped out of the bed and began throwing on his clothes. As soon as he was dressed, he limped rapidly out of his room and down the corridor.

He saw no one. A wall clock told him it was near noon. He turned and hurried in the direction of the automat.

The others were all there. They looked up from their lunch, staring at him as if he was a ghost as he came into the room. "Eli!" cried Tammy. And Howell jumped to his feet.

"What are you doing up?" he demanded. He came swiftly around the table in front of him and steered Eli to a chair.

"Why shouldn't I be up?" asked Eli. "What's wrong with all of you?"

"For one reason," said How-

ell, grimly, "because you're full of nembutalline. You should be dead to the world for ten hours yet. And why ask us—" he checked himself, staring narrowly at Eli—"don't you remember?"

"Remember what?" asked Eli.

"Mel," said Howell, turning his head.

The tall young medician got up from his table and came over to Eli, peering into his eyes. "Look at that, Arthur," he said; "his pupils are normal."

"They couldn't be!" said Howell, stooping forward.

"Look for yourself."

"With the drug in him—"

"Never mind that," interrupted Eli, speaking slowly and clearly, and with a strange, furious calmness. "I don't remember what happened last night, or why you should give me nembutalline, and I want you to tell me."

They looked at each other. Howell spoke. "About ten o'clock last night," he said, "we turned on a news broadcast. There was a report among other things that a number of leading Members had been arrested and would be tried for genocide. They read off some names and one of them was Seth Maguin—"

"Seth—" white-faced, Eli swayed on his chair. The big hands of Mel caught him.

"Arthur—" the young man turned on Howell. "I don't think you ought to tell him now."

"I'll handle this," said Howell, relentlessly, towering over Johnstone in the chair. "You collapsed, Eli; and when you came to, you were out of your head. You wanted to leave for Cable Island right away. Do you remember now?"

Eli shook his head. "No," he said faintly.

TAMMY brought him a glass of water. He drank gratefully, and a little color came back to his face. He straightened up in the chair.

"I gave you enough nembutalline to keep you out for twenty-four hours," said Howell. "And here you are, bright and awake without any signs of the drug on you."

"Something woke me," said Eli.

"What?" asked Ntoane. His dark face leaned forward between the shoulders of Howell and Mel Bruger. Johnstone stared back at him as if fascinated. "I don't know," he said. "Do you?"

"What are you talking about?" broke in Howell, sharply. "What could wake you? We were all in here."

Almost with an effort, Eli wrenched his gaze away from Ntoane. He looked over at the

worried face of Tammy; and smiled at her. "It's all right," he said.

"All right, hell!" said Howell. "You couldn't come out from under the nembutalline unless somebody pumped a antiactant into you; and none of us here could do it. Is there somebody else in the station?"

"No," said Eli. He got up, suddenly. "What's the news?" he asked.

"Oh, no you don't," spoke up Howell. "You aren't going to listen to any news until we get to the bottom of this. I don't want you going off again the way you did last night."

"They're meeting this afternoon on Cable Island to dissolve the Groups and set up Central Headquarters," said Tammy, suddenly. "Is that what you wanted to know, Eli?"

"I don't know," answered Eli. "Thanks, Tammy." He sat down again, suddenly. "Something's happened to me, and I don't know what it is." He got up suddenly and began to walk around the room. The rest of them watched him. He stopped in front of Ntoane. "You're a Member," he said, calmly.

"Yes," said Ntoane.

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"You had to find out for yourself," answered Ntoane. "So Seth said."

"What woke me?"

A look of pain crossed Ntoane's sensitive, dark face. "I'm sorry," he said. "You still have to find out for yourself."

"What is this?" interrupted Howell. He looked at Ntoane, incredulously. "You're one of those crackpots?"

Ntoane smiled sadly. Tammy went to Eli and took hold of one of his hands with both of hers. He looked down at her and patted her comfortingly on the shoulder.

"I'm not going to leave you," he said. "But right now I'm going to have to work this out by myself." He raised his head and included the others in his gaze. "I'm going up to the solar. Please—don't any of you disturb me for a while."

He turned and went out of the room, feeling Tammy's hands slip despairingly from his. But he did not turn and look back.

HE WALKED down the corridor and rose alone in the elevator. The solar, under the high, bright sun of noon, was still and hot. He walked across it and stood staring away across the level, rolling ocean, toward the northeast, toward Cable Island.

And now it was time to remember. It was time to bring back what he had buried and

forgotten, what he had locked away by exercise of his own will. A point in time had been passed, a peak to which he had climbed, and now it was downhill all, and the only way was forward. There was no alternate. And now that he had reached this point it was inevitable, so that while once he had known that it might not be, and always he had struggled against it, now he knew that it had always had to be and therefore there was a sense of relief at last in facing the fact of it.

Remember, he said to himself. Do you remember? A man has eyes and he sees, a man has ears and he hears. And once a man—no, a boy—had something and he somethinged, and he could not bear it. And so he denied it, as a man will say, I will not see, I cannot see. I will not hear. I cannot hear. I will not—

For the anguish of it was very great. Day by day, from the time that the world was small, it had grown. For as the world grew, he saw more, he heard more—and he—it grew. So, day by day, the load became more heavy, in beauty and in pain. And he was only a boy, a young boy, alone. You cannot blame him. There was the world of which his widening perceptions showed him more and more every day. And there was this faculty of his which more and more revealed to him; until he could not bear it.

Was it my fault? O, cry in agony! I did not make the world. The boy alone and the night sky above Bermuda as he walked, a child, lonely and different. I did not make myself. Blessed are the blind for they shall not see tears. Blessed are the deaf, for they shall not hear the sound of weeping. And blessed are they —who do not understand.

And he was a child, a child —a boy who should have played and fought and studied and struggled and grown. Instead he walked the level island by the sea in the dark night, under the many stars, hunting for peace. Peace, peace, in the name of mercy, a grown man is little enough and weak enough to face the hunt for peace! And even there, it followed him, the knowing and the feeling, until he could bear it no longer.

And so he denied it. By function of sharp will he amputated this greater-knowing section of himself, denied it utterly and put it from him, walled off the channel to it in his brain.

And now it was time to remember. For something terrible had wakened him from his sleep, something that left him no choice but to remember, and something that he would

not know with clarity until he did remember. And now it was time. And now it was time. And now it was time...

He stood facing the ocean with his arms stiff at his sides, his fists clenched and the sweat streaming down his face.

And now it is time. Now is the time. Now. Now.

No.

Now.

Mentally, he reached out his strong hands to tear down the long held barrier walls. And emotionally the w e a k l i n g spirit within him cringed and cowered and the hands faltered.

You have no choice.

I can't.

You can handle it now.

I can't.

You are older. You are ready now.

I can't. I can't I can't I can't I can't I can't...

OUT OF swirling darkness, he came back, a failure, wondering what had roused him. And then, looking out through the glass with seeing eyes once more, he saw an airboat landing in a furious cloud of spray dashed high against the jetty. The hatch swung back, a figure leaped out and came sprinting toward the solar. Moving automatically, Eli went to meet him and opened the transparent door in the dome wall.

It was Clyde.

Haggard face to haggard face, they stared at each other. "Downstairs," said Clyde. "Downstairs quick and block the shaft. There's ships behind me."

Eli turned; and together they ran for the elevator. The capsule was waiting for them and once in it, they plummeted down the shaft to the fourth level. Howell, passing down the corridor, saw them explode from the capsule and swung about on his heel to face them.

"A r t h u r! Where's the switch for the storm blocks?"

Howell stared. From the lounge entrance behind him Ntoane came hurrying out, followed by Tammy and Mel.

"What's this?" cried Howell, annoyed.

Eli swung on Ntoane. "The storm blocks—"

But the other man was already moving off down the corridor. At the midpoint of one corridor wall, he pressed an unobtrusive stud and a panel swung back. Within was a heavy, single handled switch, and he pulled it, over and down.

In the silence that held them all, a faint metallic grating sound came from distant parts of the station and down the elevator shaft. The heavy blocks that sealed the station's

weaker spots from anything an angry sea could do were now in place. They were sealed now, in by metal or concrete, nowhere less than half a foot in thickness.

"What *is* this?" Howell shouted again.

Clyde answered. "I'll show you."

He looked around him, and Eli pointed toward the entrance of the lounge. Quickly, the younger man led the way to and into the room where the viewing screen sat, a bubble of blankness. He set it for exterior scan and switched it on.

The ocean above them ballooned into miniature reproduction within it, the solar as its central point.

"Look," said Clyde, pointing to sky to the station's northeast.

They looked and saw, high and distant, dots approaching swiftly, dots dropping and swelling into flattened, individual shapes, five of them, growing into recognition as ten-man police airboats.

"They're after me," said Clyde. He swung on Johnstone. "And after you. And the rest of you because you're connected with Eli. They didn't expect me to come here."

"Why did you?" asked Ntoane.

Clyde grinned, a weary, but cheerful grin. "They've got nothing but small arms," he said. "And they're all air and surface craft. While they sit around up there and wait for another boat to answer their call for heavy arms or explosive, we can get away in your underwater tender."

"Good work," said Eli, approvingly.

"Look here," said Howell, breaking in suddenly. "I don't undersand this at all. Whose ships are those? Why should I run away? Perhaps this man's a criminal of some sort—" he looked at Clyde unfavorably.

"Don't be a fool, Arthur!"

"Don't call me a fool!" Howell turned on him. "I've got nothing to do with politics—"

"That's beside the point," broke in Clyde. "We're wasting precious time," he pointed to the screen in which they could see the ships now coming in for a landing at the jetty. "Let's get into the tender and out of range before they can trace us."

"You just sit tight," said Howell, "until we thresh this out. In the first place, you can't get away from here by tender; there isn't any tender."

CLYDE stared at him. "Are you crazy? Nobody builds in the ocean without some

kind of submersible for general use."

"Well, there *was* one," said Howell. "But it developed some kind of warp in the hull so that its lock leaked. I told the university to haul it to the mainland for repairs."

"Good God, Arthur!" said Mel. "Didn't you requisition a replacement?"

"What am I supposed to be, a submarine polo enthusiast?" snapped Howell, annoyedly. "Of course I didn't requisition a replacement; what did we want an underwater runabout for?"

"Are you asking me that now?" asked Mel, meaningfully.

Clyde let out a heavy breath and sat down suddenly on the arm of one of the lounge's big chairs. "Sorry," he said, heavily, looking at all of them. "If I'd had any idea of this, of course I'd never have led them here."

"I still don't see what all the fuss is about," fumed Howell. "If those are Transportation ships up there, they've got no authority over the rest of us. We're Medical Group, and Eli's Underseas."

Clyde stared at him. "Where have you been these last few weeks? Jupiter?"

"Forgive him," put in Ntoane. "Arthur never has paid much attention to anything outside medicine." He turned to the older man. "Arthur," he said. "The Groups are gone. Remember how we've been talking about it? That means the Group rights are gone, too."

"It's Tony Sellars' world," added Clyde. "Those are his ships up there; and they'll take whatever he wants them to take, which in this case is us."

For a moment Howell glared around at the grim face of the others. Then, gradually, the fire began to go out of him and be replaced by uncertainty. He shook his head finally, and sat down without saying anything further. Suddenly he looked tired, and very old.

Above them, the sudden slam of an explosion came echoing through the material of which the station was made, down to them. They listened but it was not repeated. In the silence Eli spoke to Clyde. "What happened?"

"I woke up," answered Clyde. He looked at Eli. "Sit down," he said, gently. "I've got some bad news for you."

"Bad news?" echoed Eli.

He stared at the younger man and his own words seemed to buzz in his ears. Abruptly he seemed to go away from Clyde and all the others, as if he was standing

at the end of a long tunnel and they were at the far end, shouting at him.

"At first I thought I could work with Tony," Clyde's distant voice came to him. "Then something happened to make me realize that the way he was going was a road I couldn't follow..."

The tunnel was whirling about Eli. Thunder rolled in the back of his mind.

"I didn't think he would scrap all justice—"

The thunder was growing louder...

"—When they arrested the Member leaders and brought them to Cable Island—"

Eli could no longer see and the thunder drowned out the voice of Clyde.

"You needn't go on," he felt himself saying. "You needn't tell me any more now, because I know—"

And out of the elemental fury that beat about him, out of the storm that rended and tore and tossed him, came a pitch, a climax, a point beyond which nothing could endure—from the thunder, lightning, a single jagged streak that struck and split and broke and utterly destroyed that which had stood so long.

And then there was knowledge and an end. He came back to the land of the living and the room in the station where they stood about him. "I remember now," he said. "Seth is dead. They shot him and the other Member leaders without a trial, late this morning. I was with him; and it woke me."

"I know it all now," he said. He looked at the faces of those about him and smiled. "There are no more barriers between us."

IX

ANTHONY GEORGE SELLARS sat frowning at the desk before him in the Speaker's anteroom of the Main Council Room of Cable Island. Swelling up from the polished desk top a small screen showed him the station on Calayo Banks Cay, from the point of view of one of his airboats at rest beside it. The solar roof was smashed and broken where the door to the jetty had been blasted loose from its hinges, and the furniture of the solar itself was overturned and disordered, but that was all.

The storm block that closed the elevator shaft had not yet been cracked.

This was unfortunate—but merely as a matter of timing. An airboat with sufficient explosive to blast an entrance should make its arrival within minutes. No, the station would undoubtedly be opened.

That was not what bothered Anthony Sellars at the moment. It was the fact that he had handled the whole business very badly—first by not taking care of Eli the minute his men had taken young Poby Richards and forced the knowledge of Eli's location from him, and secondly by mistakenly putting his trust in Clyde. He had thought he had observed in the young Spokesman for Communications a hard-headedness equal to his own; and, as always when he allowed himself to trust to anyone besides himself, he had been disappointed.

He sighed and rose from the table. In a few moments the remnants of what had been the Council of Group Representatives would be gathering in the amphitheatre beyond the small door to his right that led into the Speaker's Section of the Main Council Room. Some would come from the lower levels of the Island where they had been virtual prisoners since his unobtrusive coup here several days back. Others would have been salvaged from cities around the world where and when his men could find them. In some cases both the Spokesman and the Underspokesman of a Group were dead or unobtainable and a local Group head had been brought in in their place. But —one way or another, there was a representative for every Group; and even now they would be entering the Main Council Room, for their last official meeting.

When they were all seated, it would be his job to go in and tell them that the Group system was ready to be abolished and hint that those of them who wished to cooperate would be absorbed into his own governing organization. After that there would be nothing left but the formality of a vote. It was not a prospect to which Tony Sellars looked forward with any particular triumph. Nor could it be said that it affected his emotions adversely, either. It was the next step that should be taken in its proper order, one more duty to be performed.

He turned and began to pace the room, not nervously, but with a measured steadiness, as if the occupation was some particularly necessary exercise. There was in his walk the same thing that marked all his action—a studied acknowledgement of duty. Tony Sellars was, in fact, in the truest sense, a slave to duty.

FEW PEOPLE understood this man who had been Spokesman for Transporta-

tion for over twenty years. People did not warm to Anthony George Sellars the way they warmed to Eli Johnstone; rather they were chilled by him and in many cases, repelled. The majority disliked him and were a little afraid of him. A minority found things to admire in him; and surprisingly, within the ranks of this minority, he was capable of inspiring an almost fanatic attachment to himself. But far and away the greatest asset of his nature was the strength he very obviously possessed.

Sellars was strength personified; for this reason even people who disliked him would follow him. This single virtue was patent upon him. In fact it shone through him, not like an inner light, but like the hidden molten glow of a quiescent volcano, sullen, dogged and unquenchable. The physical forces of an earlier age would have wasted themselves on such a man. They could only have broken his body and left his will untouched. A few such men are born from time to time, and Anthony Sellars was one of them.

And he did not desire power for its own sake. Like Johnstone, he was a child of his time—but while Eli had opened himself to the uncertainty and self-doubt of his period, seeking, asking, letting himself be tossed in any direction in his hunting for a logic to life, Tony Sellars had narrowed himself, admitting only those questions that permitted of a clear-cut positive or negative answer. And when it became necessary to go farther afield into the greyness of an unclear problem, he judged as justly as he could and then forced a decision in terms of black and white. For his own purpose, he had reduced the problems of his day to his own common denominator; and the answer had been clear-cut—absolute control for the world, and by himself, the only man he could be sure would do each and every thing that Tony Sellars believed should be done if the race was to continue.

—And now he had done what he ought, and won what he should—with the single exception of Johnstone, the destroying of whom he regretted, for the loss of talent it entailed. He did not like Eli. The natures of the two men had been too antipathetic for that. But that did not enter the problem, for the dislikes as well as the likes his emotional being was capable of had long since been equally whipped to heel by his imperious will. He neither loved nor hated; he neither joyed

nor sorrowed. In this hour of his triumph he tramped the floor of the anteroom without elation or apprehension, or consideration of reward. Personal reward to him was a term without meaning. As near an automaton as living flesh and blood can make itself, he merely surveyed the arena of his recent victory and paced away the moments intervening before the inexorable developments of events should move him to a further arena, a further struggle, and a further duty.

He looked once more at his chronometer. A few minutes yet remained.

He turned abruptly out of the path of his pacing and went back to the desk. Seating himself, he pressed the catch on a drawer and sprung it open. Then, reaching inside he took out the small memnonic cube impressed with the notes of the speech he would make. He closed the drawer again; and, lifting the cube, placed it on the desk.

—As it touched the dark, gleaming plane of the surface a sudden sensation flashed through him—as if he had suddenly come in contact with a live wire. And he froze abruptly, like a man paralyzed, one hand on the arm of his chair, the other outstretched and lying on the desktop, holding the cube.

It seemed then, to Tony Sellars, so long the complete master of himself, as if contact with the desk had without warning burst open some long-forgotten unguarded door in his mind and that he now stood helpless and aghast at what entered through this rusty portal. Something he could neither describe nor understand reached through and held him. Caught by a strange compulsion, he sat for a moment staring at the cube in his fingers, then raised his eyes to look beyond the desk.

BEFORE him it seemed that the air was thickening and taking form. And, as he watched, the figure of Eli Johnstone, who should by rights have been trapped in the station his men were now besieging, seemed to coalesce into shape before him. And the figure looked at him and spoke. "I'm not really here, Tony," it said. "You and I are just in contact by courtesy of the Members."

Sellars' vocal cords broke free of their control. "What is this?"

The figure that was Eli smiled. "I suppose you could call it a telepathic chat," he answered. "Or a meeting of meeting of minds, or some such thing. I don't know any-

thing beyond the fact that I seem to be a good subject for such thing; and frankly I don't consider it important. On the other hand what I have to say is."

The door still stood ajar in Sellars' mind. Looking through it he was forced to accept the truth of what he saw and heard; and the truth in Eli's words presented itself to his mind like a palpable thing. It was a weird sensation, but an undeniable one. And Sellars, who had trained himself to face anything, forced himself to face this. "So you're a Member."

"No," said Eli. "You'd think so, wouldn't you? But I'm not."

"What do you call yourself then?"

"That's going to be a little hard to explain," answered Eli. "I suppose you'd call the Members who have psi-abilities, freaks?"

"I would."

"Yes," agreed Eli. "And now suppose you consider them for the purposes of argument to be just one small minority in a much larger class of freaks—in the sense that they have unrecognized abilities beyond the ordinary human."

"Such as—?"

"Perhaps an eidetic memory," said Eli; "perhaps a peculiar color sensitivity, or an instinct for putting musical sounds together so that they have meaning."

"Ordinary people can have talents."

"How about a homing instinct, an unfailing sense for direction? An immunity to all diseases? Perhaps a green thumb for growing things or a knack for handling wild animals."

"Go on," said Sellars.

"How many of these would be recognized even by the people that possessed them as extraordinary human abilities? What if the race is multi-talented, much more so than has been recognized, but that only during these latter years of our civilization have ignorance and social pressures to make the individual conform allowed relaxed enough for the more dramatic talents to show themselves?"

"Suppositions," said Sellars; "but go on."

"Well then," continued Eli, "there might be more freaks in the world than anyone suspects; and some of them might live and die because their particular ability could find no use in the society of their time."

"I can guess that this is all leading up to your own supposed ability," said the older man immovably; "let's get directly to that."

"You want to know what I

am?" Johnstone smiled wanly.

"Yes."

"I'm an instinctive leader," said Eli. He looked at the other, at Sellars' flat, expressionless face above the desk. "Not a ruler, Tony—a leader, a forerunner of the race. My instinct is to pick a path, like the bell wether of a flock of sheep, so that the rest can follow safely behind me."

SELLARS smiled, one of his rare, winty smiles. "This is your ability?"

"No," for a second Eli looked a little sad. "No, Tony, that's just my instinct, the thing that drives me. My freakish ability is something different—but very handy for a bell wether. I have what you might call understanding."

The hint of an impatient sigh escaped from between Tony Sellars' straight lips. "Understanding," he echoed, with faint derision and disgust.

"Not ordinary understanding," said Eli. "Listen to me, Tony; this is something based on empathy and refined to a point of complete comprehension. It's like seeing or hearing. I *must* understand; I can't help myself. When I was a child it bothered me so much that I deliberately drove myself into partial insanity to escape it."

He looked at the unyielding face of the man before him.

"Anything that lives," he went on softly, "but most of all my own people. To come into contact with any one is to know them completely; don't ask me how I do it. Some of my understanding comes from what I see and hear them do. Some just—comes. I meet them and I feel immediately what it is like to be each one, individually. And then I know them, mind, and body and soul—" he looked at the other man and spoke gently "—as I know you, Tony."

"Of course," said Sellars, with quiet sarcasm. "You know me. You understand everybody. And you're a natural leader. So now you've shown up with the help of the Members to kill me and take over the government."

"No," answered Eli. "I can't kill anything—as you can." And his eyes accused Sellars.

"You're thinking of the Member Leaders I had executed, no doubt," said Sellars, unmoved.

"Yes."

"I doubt if your understanding reaches to a comprehension of that," Sellars told him; "of the very necessary reasons for getting those troublemakers out of the way before the general population

would have its inevitable change of heart."

"You're wrong," said Eli. "I *do* understand why you thought it was necessary; I tell you no one has secrets from me now, Tony."

SELLARS made a sudden impatient effort to break loose from the compulsion that still held his body bound to the chair he sat in. A glance at the chronometer on his wrist told him it was now time for him to make his entrance into the Council Room beyond the door. But he could not move. "Let's get this over with," he said harshly. "You're here for a reason. Get to it."

"All right," answered Eli. "Your coup is all but completed; the world is practically yours."

"It *is* mine," said Sellars, grimly.

"Not quite yet," said Eli; "it can still go in a different direction from what you planned."

"No it can't," retorted Sellars. "My organization is in control. There is no possibility of going back. The Groups have been discredited forever as a form of government; and no one will ever trust them again."

"You're right," said Eli; "there is no going back. But there is another way of going forward—a far better one."

"No," repeated Sellars. "No one can change the path of development now. Even if I'm killed or removed, the world will go on in the direction I've pointed it. No one can alter that.

Eli looked at him. "There *is* a person who can; a single person."

"You?" The wintry smile was back on Sellars' lips.

"No," said Eli. "You."

"Me?" The older man stared at him.

"If you changed your mind," Eli said. "If you saw a different path and took it, even though it meant giving up your personal gains, the world would go that way."

For a moment Sellars said nothing. Then he spoke. "You *are* insane," he said, with almost a touch of awe.

"No," said Eli. "Remember, I said I know you, Tony; I can speak to you with the voice of your own conscience. That's what puts me in the bell wether position before all others. And because I understand individuals, I understand the race that is the sum of the individuals; and I know which way the race should go."

"You do, do you?"

Eli nodded. "It should govern itself and follow me."

For a long moment Sellars just looked at him. "Sweet

Heaven!" he said at last, breaking his self-control for the first time since he had been a very young boy. "You'd *talk* me into letting go of all this?"

"I have no weapons but words," answered Eli. "Listen—" he spoke swiftly—"Let me tell you first why you chose to bind the Earth together under your own single rule. You thought that people had outgrown the Groups, and you were right. They outgrew the Groups as they had outgrown all other forms of Government in the past. Down through history, you said to yourself, the pendulum has swung—first toward the extreme of a strict rule, then toward loose rule. First toward a centralization of power, then toward a dispersal of power. The cities of Greece to Alexander. Rome to the Caesars. Feudalism to the strong monarchies. And so on down to our own time with the Groups foundering in their own dissentions, tangled in their conflict-in authorities, and the world at a standstill."

"This is fact," said Sellars.

"As you see it."

"As it is," insisted the older man. "The world is sick. I've operated to cut out the cancer of a sick government; my way was the only way."

"No," objected Eli softly. "There's a better way; and I'll show it to you. And you will take it—because you must obey your conscience. Now listen—down through history, the same history that you surveyed, two points of view have marched side by side. One has always said, *'This is the way it has gone in the past; therefore accordingly, this way it must continue'*. And the other has said, *'All things develop or die. What is past is gone forever. The road ahead is always new.'*"

"In the end everything follows the cyclic theory," insisted Sellars, "repeating and repeating."

"So the amoeba said, floating on the surface of the ocean, with his highest point the crest of the wave and his lowest the trough between two waves," replied Eli. "And if he was right, what are we doing here, a hundred feet above the waterlevel of mid-Atlantic? But suppose it were true—is there any reason it must continue to be true? And if it is true, what useful purpose do you perform—assisting that which needs no assistance to continue?" He paused and looked at Sellars. "You see, your argument was only to convince yourself, your reason for what you've done was not really based on logic."

"Oh?" said Sellars.

"No," answered Eli, "and I'll tell you what it is without your asking, because I know you won't ask. All the people of our time stand face-to-face with a question that has its roots deep in the past history of the race. Man has always fought for control over his environment. 'If I only had food and shelter—' he said in the beginning, and later added '—and freedom—and health—and a decent living standard—and security—and a well-adjusted personality—then the millenium will have arrived, the world will be a practical utopia, *then* I will be happy.

"His list of the things he wanted at first were small—but it grew long as he added to it. And he added until it seemed he would never run out of nameable things to want.

"But he did; he has. During this last hundred years of our world, the last items on the list were crossed off, fulfilled. At last, man has everything. And—according to his age-old promise to himself, he should now be happy. Is he?"

ELI JOHNSTONE stopped and looked at Sellars. And Sellars looked back without an answer.

"He is not," said Eli, answering himself. "And the knowledge that he is not has turned the taste of life sour in his mouth and dried his heart up with fear. He is like an ugly man who has never had anything but rags of old clothes, and who has told himself that if only he could dress finely he would no longer be ugly. At last he has gotten his fine clothes and instead of them making him handsome, they have only highlighted and thrown more into relief his ugliness, the disfigurements of his vices—his envy, his treachery, his meanness, his inability to get along with his fellows. And seeing himself as he is now, he has been heartsick, because it seems to him that he has exhausted the possibilities and that there is nothing more he can do for himself."

Sellars' eyes had dropped toward the desktop. He did not look up as Eli went on.

"You're a strong man, Tony," he said; "almost too strong for your own good. You can't face a problem without doing something about it. If it won't be resolved, you force a solution—so that, if nothing else, it will appear to be settled for the time being. And that is exactly what you've done with the world at the present time."

Still Sellars said nothing and did not raise his eyes.

"Regimentation," went on Eli. "Forced order and activity, commanded by a single central head; all the appearance of progress and development. That was your idea. Keep the pump going, even if the well is dry. Pretend that we have not yet reached the decisive end-point."

Sellars raised his eyes finally. His face was hardened with pain. "What else is there?"

Eli smiled. "Thank you, Tony; you asked. And I'll tell you." He smiled again at the bitter incredulity in Sellars' eyes.

"The Members had the right instinct, you know," he said. "They've been dreaming of a superman without the faults of man. It was an immature dream, because it assumed that we would suddenly hop to the top of the mountain without the labor of climbing it. But they were looking in the right direction.

"Man has battled his external world and won. Now he begins a new campaign to conquer his inner self. The old time of physical struggle is behind us. From now on we march into new land, so different and unknown and vast that no one can even guess at what lies waiting for us there."

He stopped and looked at the other man. "Well, Tony?"

SELLARS was free of the compulsion that had so long held him. But he did not notice; he put his elbow on the desk and leaned his head against his hand, wearily rubbing his forehead with slow movements of his fingertips. "If I believed this—" he said. "If I could believe this—"

"Why do you think I've come here, except to prove it to you?" replied Eli. "The proof is here for you to discover for yourself. The first and biggest block that we face—"

"No!" said Sellars suddenly and sharply, interrupting him. He straightened up behind the desk and shook his head briefly, like a man coming out of a daze. "This is fantastic. No, Eli—" he put both hands palm down on the desk and shoved himself up onto his feet. Solid and unyielding he looked across the desk at Johnstone.

"It was a good try; and you almost made it," he said. "But I'm a little beyond the years of believing in fairy tales just because they're what I want to hear. Sorry." And he stepped out from behind his desk and turned for the door, picking up the m e m n o n i c cube with his speech notes.

"Fairy tales?" said Eli. "Are you sure that what I told you was just a fairy tale?"

Sellars paused and faced him once more. "I'll become sure," he answered; "one day I'll be positive. And what will you do now?"

"Nothing," said Eli, quietly. "I told you I had no weapons but words. There is your door. Beyond it, your representatives are waiting for you. If you choose to walk to and through that door without facing what I have to offer you, all I can do is stand and watch you go."

Sellars lowered his head and started toward the door. There was something ponderous and awesome about this last gesture. It was as if his great will had such mass that sheer momentum must carry it slowly but inevitably to disaster, as the thousands of tons of an ocean liner turn slowly from a broken towing cable and with deceptive and terrible gentleness swing in toward the silent, waiting crowd on the fragile pier. Almost he made it to the door, but before he reached it, his feet had slowed to a halt and he turned painfully and with hesitation to face Eli—this man who had never hesitated over a decision in his life, and who now stood torn and helpless with the agony of something new—indecision.

"Damn you!" he said. "What's your proof?"

Eli moved toward him until they looked into each others' faces across a distance of only inches. "First," he said, "comes trust. It is the first step for all of us on this new road we walk. The walls of secrecy and shame and hidden fears must go down. If you want, Tony, you can look into my mind with the help of the Members and see that what I told you of the future is true and possible. But the only way this is possible is for you to let me, at the same time look into your mind. If we do this, we will have no secrets from each other; and no one can force you to it. You must agree and be willing to trust."

"—trust—" echoed Sellars, his voice struggling.

"The time will come when everyone will trust and be open with each other," said Eli sympathetically. "For people brought up as we are in our time it is very hard. I can do it because I know in advance now, what I will see and meet; it's my particular strength. But everybody has his own—and yours, I think, lies in your urge to be right, no matter what the cost. Can you do it?"

"Yes," said Sellars. He seemed to gather himself. "I

can—I can—do anything."

"I know you can," answered Eli softly.

Sellars lifted his eyes to Eli's and there found reassurance. "I think I could trust you anyway."

—And with those words the barriers between them fell forever.

AFTER A long while, Eli said, ..."You see?"

"I see," said Tony Sellars. There was a deep emptiness in his voice; he walked over and sat down heavily at the desk. "What will I do now?" he asked hopelessly, suddenly very human and defenseless.

"Believe in a different future; that's all," said Johnstone. "And work for it. Work is something we'll never lack. Not in this generation, nor the next, nor even the next after that will everyone in the world be willing to do what you've just done." He moved forward toward the desk. "You think I've taken something from you, Tony; but you're going to find that in losing that you've gained something much bigger and better to replace it. Hope, Tony."

"Yes, hope..." as if roused slowly from his preoccupation with himself, Tony's eyes went to the screen on his desk which showed his ships still clustered about the station. He reached out with one hand and depressed a stud. Invisibly a direct connection flared between his desk and the pilot room of the lead ship. The scene vanished to be replaced by the features of a slim young man wearing a pilot's uniform on which the green Transportation facings were still to be seen.

"Your orders are cancelled," said Sellars, wearily; "return to Cable Island." And he cut the connection in the face of the young man's startled expression.

"Thanks," said Eli. "And now?"

Sellars took a deep breath and rose to his feet. "Now," he said, his voice gaining firmness as he spoke. "I am due to talk to the group heads in the Council Room."

Across the open channel of his understanding, the cost and meaning of this statement reached through to Eli. "I could tell them for you, Tony."

"No." Sellars shook his head; his old certainty was flooding back. "The mistake was mine. The explanation will have to be mine."

He turned from the desk and made his way toward the door as Eli watched him go. With his hand on the stud of it, he turned and looked back.

"Those Members—" he said. "I suppose the Members I hadn't caught told you about them."

"No," answered Eli. "I'm not ordinarily telepathic, but that one time I was in actual contact. One of the men executed was Seth Maguin—a half-brother of mine."

Sellars' face went bleak. "I see," he said. He paused for a moment. "I'm sorry."

"I know," said Eli softly.

For a second more, Sellars hesitated. Then he turned and, pushing the door open, went through it. It started to swing closed again, but some invisible force caught it and held it open.

"Thank you, whoever that was," said Eli; "I did want to watch."

He drifted forward to where the angle of the room hid him from the eyes of those in the amphitheater. Beyond the square, flat back of Sellars he saw the faces of the Group leaders in their sections about the room, silent and waiting.

"Spokesmen and Representatives," began Sellars and hesitated, as if gathering strength.

— *"Eli!"*

Johnstone turned and saw a movement in the air beside him; and as he watched he saw Tammy coalesce out of nothingness.

"I wanted to come, too," she said, looking up at him. "Eli, do you know you don't limp any more?"

He put his shadow arm around her shadow shoulders, feeling, distant miles away across the ocean in the station, the warmth and softness of her as his physical body duplicated the action. He smiled back at her.

"That's because I've given up being a cripple otherwise," he said. "Now hush, and listen; this is something that in our present civilization it takes a great man to do."

They fell silent. Out before them Sellars lifted the cube he held in his hand and looked at it for a second. Then quietly he dropped it into the disposal slot of the desk before him and watched it incinerated. He looked out once more at his audience and put both his big, square hands palm down on the desk in front of him. He leaned forward and began to speak.

"Gentlemen," he commenced simply, "I have made a mistake..."

★

Editorial

TRENDS IN SCIENCE FICTION

IT IS NEARLY ten years since the first big anthology of science fiction, Groff Conklin's "The Best of Science Fiction," set the stage for what was to be a flood. (Prior to this there had been "The Other Worlds", a hybrid assortment of fantasy and science fiction, edited by Phil Stong with an introduction that left no doubt about the anthologist's belief that there was little in the field worth reading once—let alone collecting between hard covers—and two small collections edited by Donald A. Wollheim: "The Pocket Book of Science Fiction" and the Viking "Portable Novels of Science".) It might be interesting to note the general categories of types that Conklin drew up for his first anthology and examine them for viability. (Stories mentioned below that are not identified, as to issue and date, are in the "Best of Science Fiction".)

Part One was "The Atom"; the timeliness of the subject made this an obvious choice, even though the actual percentage of stories dealing with atomic power and the implications of its attainment and use, constructive or destructive, was not very large prior to Hiroshima. There were stories dealing with the nature of the atom, such as William Lemkin's "An Atomic Adventure" (*Wonder Stories Quarterly*, Fall 1930), more exposition than anything else, and Joseph Skidmore's series which began with "The Adventures of Posi and Nega" (*Amazing Stories*, September 1932) — about which the less said the better. There were stories dealing with attempts to unlock atomic power, mostly ending in catastrophe, such as "The Revolt of the Atoms" by Orlovsky (*Amazing Stories*, April 1929) which envisioned uncontrolled chain reactions.

There were occasional tales of transmutation of elements. And there were glorified fairy tales—such as Ray Cummings "Girl in the Golden Atom"—which gave very imaginative portrayals of what one might see, hear, feel and sense were one to shrink into the microcosmic, but were otherwise utter nonsense. Mostly, however atomic power was just taken for granted, or mysterious elements did the trick—like the famous "X" in the "Skylark of Space", (*F. F. F. Publishers*) which could as well have been black magic for all the insight in atomic physics. The better stories did indicate that there was tremendous power there if it could be tapped under con-

trolled conditions. It wasn't until the war years that any science fictional speculations came close to the reality, with such tales as Heinlein's "Blowups Happen" and "Solution Unsatisfactory", Cartmill's "Deadline", etc.

The period immediately following Hiroshima saw a long series of horror stories, with atomic bomb and radiation effects doubling for Frankenstein's monster. The theme remains with us, and will probably continue so long as the very real danger symbolized by it continues; but given the existing state of the world, I'm inclined to doubt whether any science fiction author now can say "I'm scared", or "This may be the end" much more effectively than it was said, over and over, between 1946 and 1950. And it looks as if the wonderful machines which draw power directly from the atoms in a grain of sand, etc., are out. Such marvels as the following, "By releasing the interatomic energy in a single pound of ordinary earth, we could blast out cubic yards of rock, excavating these enormous galleries which you behold." ("Older Than Methuselah," by Stanton A. Coblentz, *Amazing Stories*, May 1935") belong in the same museum as H. G. Wells' moving sidewalks and aeropiles, Jules Verne's Columbiad, and Victor MacClure's super airship, *Ark of the Covenant*, etc.

Atomic energy remains, but new theories of the structure of the atom, or of utilizations of atomic energy are not likely to be the main-springs of science fiction stories to come—any more than mainstream stories are written about that marvelous invention, the horseless carriage.

PART TWO was entitled "The Wonders of Earth", which covers such fields as geology, biology, botany, oceanology, bacteriology, etc., as well as "lost cities," etc. It would seem that this range of sciences has hardly been overworked, as have atomic physics and preludes to spaceflight; although exploration via the airplane has made the likelihood of any "lost" civilizations in the far corners of the terrestrial surface very small, there are still enough "wonders of the Earth" left to furnish backgrounds. A new theory about what may be found could we bore ten miles or more further down than has been reached so far, and a description of the actual experiment is not, of course, enough to make a story these days—as it was in the case of Capt. S. P. Meek's "The Osmotic Theorem" (*Science Wonder Quarterly, Winter* 1930.) And it is doubtful that we shall see more stories like the same author's "Murgatroyd Experiment", wherein the food problems of the future are tackled via changing the human metabolism into a plant metabolism—so that people could get their nourishment directly from the sun. (*Amazing Stories Quarterly*, Winter 1929.) But biological, botanical, and bacteriolical speculations should still be possible. For one thing, it ought to be a little easier for science fiction authors to keep in touch with the latest developments in these fields unless important information in these spheres is classified and buried, too.

Part Three, "The Superscience of Man" is another subject largely fallen into disrepute since the eating of the fruit of the nuclear tree. Science fiction authors today are largely calling a moratorium on wonderful inventions and discoveries—or inventing wonderfully weird systems of psychotherapy for the gullible. This also

seems to apply to part four, "Dangerous Inventions;" authors have taken a back seat to let technicians in real life do the driving. Perhaps science fictionists now fear that if they use their imaginations too well, they'll be reading about the things they dreamt of in the following months' papers. It's much easier to re-state what someone else invented in science fiction twenty years ago; update it; graft it onto a smoother story, and use some of the time saved to write letters or articles deploring the absence of the sense of wonder that was the foundation of science fiction in the first place.

The next category, "Adventures in Dimension" is still wide open, partly because it's quite safe, perhaps—and dubious as science fiction, anyway. Dimensions above three exist as theoretical values in mathematics, and very useful ones there. There's no evidence that such (including time) exist as tangible realities in which one could travel or set foot. (But I'll admit I've never complained about any other editor's running time travel stories as science fiction, and I've never hesitated myself when I liked the story.)

Finally, we had "From Outer Space," a subject which will probably be good material for stories so long as outer space is there and we are here (wherever here may be at any specific time) in condition to be interested.

The aim of the original Conklin volume was to present as representative a cross-section of science fiction between 1926 and 1946 as was possible, within the limitations of length, problems of obtaining rights, etc. It could not be comprehensive, and the anthologist stated in his introduction that he had no illusions of achieving any such thing. On its own terms, the book remains a rather good one; all the stories are readable, though few will fit into any single standards for the "best".

THERE HAVE been trends from the beginning. First we had what Hugo Gernsback defined succinctly in advertisements for his magazines as "mechanics dramatized". The two Heinlein stories and the Cartmill story, noted above surely would have been acceptable to the old *Science Wonder Stories;* "The Tissue-Culture King", by Julian Huxley, and "The Retreat From Mars" by Cecil B. White, and others, are from the old Gernsback *Amazing Stories;* and I'd guess that Taine's "Ultimate Catalyst", Gallun's "Davy Jones' Ambassador", and Schachner's "Ultimate Metal" might have won the approval of science fiction's first—and in some ways greatest editor.

Then came the action-pulp story with the super-science or pseudo-science background; this was nothing new, of course, but the original *Astounding Stories of Super-Science* was the first publication to be devoted exclusively to this brand of fiction. "Spawn of the Stars" by Charles Willard Diffin is the only selection from the Clayton issues that you will find in the Conklin anthology—although Farley's "Liquid Life" very likely could have been acceptable to *Astounding's* first editor.

Whether the two older magazines consciously broadened their policies as a result of the Clayton competition, or whether the trend toward the action story in a science fictional background—with or without the careful attention to science that was generally present in the Gernsback and Sloane issues—would have come about in any event is a moot point. It was, however, in 1930—several months after the appearance of the first

true science fiction pulp magazine that *Science Wonder Stories* first de-emphasized the word "Science" in its title; started running a streamer "Mystery, Adventure, Romance" atop the cover; then dropped the word "Science" from the title altogether. Shortly after that, the "Science News of the Month", which had been a prime feature in *Science Wonder*, was also dropped.

The next trend was the ultra super-science story, the "thought variant", wherein sweeping and romantic formulations based as much on odd notions, Forteanisms and mysticism, as on science were presented as a revivifying element in *Astounding Stories*, now under Street and Smith's aegis. Shachner's "Ultimate Metal" comes from this period, as one of the more respectable examples; more representative, however, would be one of John Russell Fearn's super-duper flights of fancy, such as "The Brain of Light" (*Astounding Stories*, May 1934) or "Mathematica" (*Astounding Stories*, February 1936)—equally flabbergasting and far removed from the intentions of the Father of Science Fiction. They were what Gernsback rightly referred to as modern fairy tales.

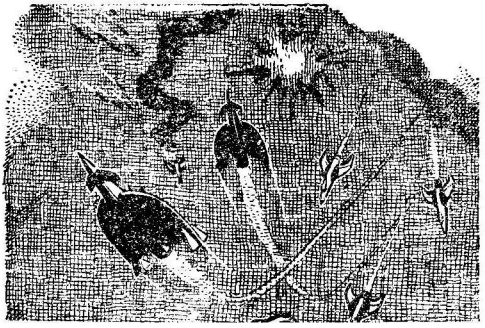
The beginning of the Campbell era, (which is still with us, but in which can be seen several trends) saw something of a return to basic origins. This was the highly technical story which became the well-known gadget story—but reasonably sound both in foundation and development. Lester del Rey's "Nerves" (September 1942) is an outstanding example of the better aspects here; another example would be H. B. Fyfye's "Locked Out" (February 1940), a simple but compelling story of a man who found he'd accidently closed himself out of his spaceship.

The second trend in the Campbell era was the sociological story; heretofore, most of the few stories in that category had been attempts at social satire, such as Stanton A. Coblentz's "After 12,000 Years" (*Amazing Stories Quarterly*, Spring 1929). This category seems to be missing from the "Best of Science Fiction", although Heinlein's "Universe" could double for it. A discussion of this trend requires more space than is left now, but I expect to get to it later on. The third trend was the psychological-philosophical story, starting with Van Vogt's weird notions of General Semantics, as set forth in "The World of Null-A" (August September, October 1945) and its sequel; running through the weirder dianetics phase (which started in the issue of May, 1950), and continuing with extra-sensory perception and the psi-functions. The latter make for good stories, as "No More Barriers" in this issue attests—but at times I wonder if they are any more scientific than witchcraft.

Meanwhile, outside of Campbell, we have seen the anti-science, the take-science-out-of-science-fiction, and the "common man" story trends, as well as the extreme introversion studies, and so on.

The current spate of articles and speeches asking what is wrong with science fiction, and trying to answer the question, looks to me like a healthy and perhaps hopeful sign. Before one can start to answer, an analyses of where science fiction has been through its relatively short career is necessary; and in criticizing the past, we can possibly find the elements which need injecting, in various dosages, in order to revivify the art. Each separate trend has brought forth possibilities which were not developed, and combinations of these may be very fruitful.

Ridley had spent twenty years gathering data — and now was he suddenly to be retired?



FAREWELL, MR. RIDLEY

by MILTON LESSER

IT WAS THREE years since Mr. Ridley had seen another human being when Adams came to the Station.

Mr. Ridley had made up his mind to like Adams, or at least to try, but he had too much to drink the night before the rocket came from Sol System (by way of Deneb), and he awoke with a hangover.

The Platian natives were excited. In their simple life, the coming of Adams' rocket was a great event. The rocket shimmered through from hyperspace, solidifying perfectly in the landing cradle. Of course, it wasn't actually a rocket; you could leave Earth by rocket a young man, and travel all your life, and never get near Plat. To Mr. Ridley, though, who remembered vividly the old days when leaving Sol System was an adventure, all the ships of space were rockets.

As soon as the landing platform rolled down and touched the surface of Plat, Adams came briskly down it holding a grip in each hand. He looked about twenty-five, Mr. Ridley decided. He was taller, straighter and probably stronger than Mr. Ridley. He didn't seem to mind Plat's

fierce blue sun. He wouldn't mind it, Mr. Ridley decided; he would be like that.

"You must be Ridley," Adams said unnecessarily. There was not another human being on Plat or closer than the Deneb System, two hundred light years away.

Mr. Ridley nodded and offered his hand. Two Platians scurried forth and took Adams' bags, disappearing toward the compound with them. Adams and Mr. Ridley shook hands. Mr. Ridley was annoyed by the machine-like perfection of Adams' handshake.

"Nice trip?" Mr. Ridley said automatically.

"I got my head crammed with Platian culture during hypnosleep," Adams told him; "I hardly remember anything since leaving Earth."

"I've had quarters prepared for you in the compound. You should find them satisfactory, but if there is anything you want, I'll consider it a pleasure to help you."

"Mighty nice of you," Adams said. Was there a faint suggestion of condescension in his voice? "But you talk as if we won't be seeing much of each other."

"That's true enough; we won't. Anthropology Central sent you here because they felt too much of my time was taken up by administration, not enough by my work. Therefore..."

"That's an interesting way of putting it."

"What do you mean?" Mr. Ridley asked coldly.

"Nothing. Forget it. You were saying?"

"Henceforth, I'll confine myself to studying the Platian culture. You'll take care of administration here. Within the limits prescribed by Anthropology Central, you'll make the laws, execute them and judge if and when and to what extent they've been violated. You understand all that?"

Adams grinned. "Good old hypnosleep," he said; "they've given me everything."

It was still early morning on Plat, but already hot. Mr. Ridley dabbed at the moisture on the sun-leathered skin at the back of his neck with an already sodden handkerchief. Adams seemed undisturbed by the heat; Adams would be like that.

"I've been here twenty years," Mr. Ridley said with sudden passion. "Ever since the Station opened. I've come to love the Platians as I hope in time you will. They are a ritualistic, pattern-seeking Apollonian race. They seek the familiar, and abhor violence. They can be taken advantage of quite easily and are slow to anger, but once

aroused they make terrible enemies."

"Why tell me?"

"Because..."

"But I already know. I've been trained by A.C. for the job. Look here, old man, I know more about the Platians than you do."

Mr. Ridley tucked his twenty years of experience on Plat back inside his head, and conducted Adams in utter silence to the compound.

IN THE DAYS and weeks which followed, Mr. Ridley had to admit that Adams hit it off perfectly with the Platians. They came to rely more and more on his judgement; they disturbed Mr. Ridley less and less frequently. He had twenty years of notes on the Platian's Apollonian culture to co-ordinate. The days were long and the pattern of life unhurried: Mr. Ridley should have accomplished much.

He didn't.

It wasn't going right; he couldn't concentrate; he was behaving abominably, he thought. Like a school-boy lover. The Platians were his love and Adams his rival. Younger, stronger, more charming. If only Adams' relationship with the Platians had been anything but perfect; if only Adams gave him a sound reason for his attitude; if only Adams behaved the way Mr. Ridley had decided in advance he would, with a cold, mechanical, precise perfection which was at once imperfect and unsatisfactory.

But Mr. Ridley never had a chance to consider the paradox. In every way, Adams was exemplary with the natives. It was *Sar* Adams this and *Sar* Adams that, and pretty soon Mr. Ridley was just the plump old man who sat on his veranda overlooking the small lake inside the compound, trying to write his cultural evaluation of the Platian people. When he finished, his job here on Plat would be over.

I'm not really old, Mr. Ridley thought. I'm only forty-seven. Nevertheless, I'm going to be replaced. For that was the real message Anthropology Central had sent, although it had not been explicit. *We are sending Adams to assist you in your administrative duties so you may spend more time on your study of the Platian culture.* They said they would contact him further after Adams had a chance to grow accustomed to his job.

And they would. They would say twenty years was too long a time for a man to remain isolated in one place. They would say Mr. Ridley

was coming home. They would say thank you, Mr. Ridley, your work is finished.

One day after dinner in the compound, Adams asked, "Do you mind if I ask a personal question?"

"You can ask anything you want," Mr. Ridley snapped at him.

"Are you really a convict?"

"They told you that?"

"In hypnosleep; they told me everything."

"Yes," Ridley said. "Twenty years ago in a fit of rage over what then was the most important thing in the world to me, I killed a man. I learned anthropology by hypnosleep and came here. It was either that or prison."

"You mean they sent you to Plat as punishment?"

"I suppose you might say that. What it really came to, though, was the fact that they couldn't get volunteers for the work out here; I had no choice but to volunteer."

"And now you love Plat, don't you?"

"Yes," Mr. Ridley admitted, "I have come to love this place. I must say, Adams, I'm very satisfied with your work."

"You are positive?"

"Yes."

"In every way?"

The line of questioning surprised Mr. Ridley. He thought of Adams as a small boy asking his teacher for a gold star. "Quite satisfied," Mr. Ridley said

Adams nodded. "In that case, I'm to give you this." He reached into his pocket and removed an envelope on which Mr. Ridley's name was printed. While Mr. Ridley opened the envelope and unfolded the paper inside, Adams turned his back discreetly. *He knows what's inside,* Mr. Ridley thought, his heart pounding against his ribs. *He knows I'm not going to like it.*

Mr. Ridley read:

Dear Ridley—

Adams was instructed by this office to give you this when you indicated complete satisfaction with his work.

Effective this date, your services on Plat are terminated. On behalf of the entire staff of Central, I would like to thank you for the fine job you have done.

Please call on me at this office upon your return to Sol System.

Most sincerely,
A. D. Younger-Koo
Staff Director
Denebian Sub-division
Anthropology Central
New York City, Earth

Mr. Ridley let his gaze wander out the window and across the terrace to the deep

blue rolling hills of Plat beyond the mirror-still waters of the lake. This was his life. The blue sunset, fading to black. The sultry heat which you came to accept because it was part of the planet you loved. The close-to-human natives with their simple, direct ways. The Apollonian society which sought comfort and pattern from the chaos of life. The ritualistic singing and dancing.

It was all gone now. Finished. Twenty years, thought Mr. Ridley bleakly. He felt a tragic sense of loss.

His life had not been wasted; he had spent twenty years doing work he loved. But now he had nothing. He had never married; out here on Plat, it was impossible. You couldn't ask a woman to share this life. Mr. Ridley snorted. He hadn't even seen a woman in ten years, since the departure of the last ship of the Denebian Tour Service.

When he set foot on Earth he would be, all at once, an old man with nothing left of his life.

Adams was pouring two stiff drinks. He offered Mr. Ridley one and offered a toast to the future of the Platian race. Mr. Ridley drank it and felt at least that Adams was sincere. Adams would look after the Platians; Adams was young and strong and liked his work.

Still, Mr. Ridley could not keep the hot tears from welling up in his eyes.

"It won't be so bad," Adams said. "You're going home after twenty years."

"Yes," Mr. Ridley said.

"After all, Earth is your home."

"I'm going home," Mr. Ridley said. He felt nothing except the choking, complete emptiness.

TWO DAYS later, Adams said, "The ship is all ready for you. It's orbited back to Earth. If you didn't find me satisfactory, I'd have returned."

"Either way I was through here eventually, is that it?"

"I'm sorry."

"No," Mr. Ridley said, "*I* am. It isn't your fault."

The Platian administrative assistants came with wreaths of flowers to see Mr. Ridley off. There were songs by a comely Platian female. *My God,* thought Mr. Ridley. *To me she's pretty. I'll probably look at human women after all this time and consider them alien.*

"Goodbye," called the Platians.

"Good luck, Ridley," Adams said.

The blue fields and hills of Plat waved their infinite

hands of grain, rippling like blue water in the Platian sunlight. *The pathetic fallacy,* thought Mr. Ridley in disgust. *Perhaps it's time they retired me after all.*

He shook hands with Adams and pulled the lever which withdrew the ship's ramp and automatically sealed the airlock. The small ship functioned with mechanical precision, Mr. Ridley thought. Just like Adams. He shimmered into hyperspace and sat down to study the hypnosleep spools which would teach him about Earth and the twenty year lapse of time.

A. D. YOUNGER-KOO said, "Come right in. Ridley." Mr. Ridley sat down in the plush chair offered him. It was winter in New York and bitterly cold. He was glad to get off the streets, where the crowds of bundled people fought the cold and stared without recognition at one another, exhaling clouds of vapor into the chilly air.

A. D. Younger-Koo was a young woman, part Caucasian, part Oriental. She wore the neat uniform of Anthropology Central and was smoking a long scented cigaret. The smile she offered Mr. Ridley seemed genuine enough. "I suppose you've finished your study of the Platians by now, Mr. Ridley?"

"Not quite; I still have some final drafting to do."

"Then if past experience is any indication, you will have many pleasant hours ahead of you."

Mr. Ridley nodded, trying his own grin on the woman. It was an insincere smile; he could feel it in the muscles of his cheek and realized A. D. Younger-Koo could tell, too. He stopped smiling. He sat there waiting for her to go on. He would have many pleasant hours ahead of him, she said. What else did you say to a man who was being retired at the age of forty-seven? What else could you say? Next thing, Mr. Ridley told himself with grim amusement, she'd be suggesting I purchase a small piece of land somewhere and cultivate a garden.

"Here at Central, we've been counting on you, Ridley."

"Counting on me? For what?"

"Well, not only you. All the people studying Apollonian cultures. There are several score in explored space, you know; as you can gather, we've had a change in policy."

"It isn't hard to figure. People aren't usually retired at my age." He wanted to say it was a pretty cheap trick,

sending Adams out as an assistant when they had known all along Adams was going to replace him. The Platian job was big enough for one man, not two.

"No, that isn't what I mean, Ridley. We've had a complete change in policy. Originally it was planned that way, so it's not really a change."

"I'm afraid I don't know what you're talking about," Mr. Ridley said stiffly.

"For fifty years now, anthropologists have been studying the Apollonian cultures. As you know, Benedict made the clear cultural distinction as early as the twentieth century. There are Apollonian cultures which seek order in chaos, which are ritualized, systematic, patterned; there are Dionysian cultures which are violent, over-passionate, individual and not group-oriented. Basically, Earth is such a culture."

"Why tell me this?" Mr. Ridley said. "I was a convicted killer. It was either a long penal term or twenty years of my life on Plat as an anthropologist. I chose Plat, but now all that is finished."

YOUNGER-KOO shook her head, and smiled.

"For fifty years, Ridley, the human anthropologists have been studying the outworlds. We now have encyclopedic knowledge. You can probably tell me, given a set of circumstances, what the Platian reaction will be far better than we can predict the reactions of Earthmen to a similar set of circumstances. Couldn't you?"

"I guess so," Mr. Ridley admitted.

"With the body of material now gathered, we're going to remedy that. First, of course, the material had to be gathered. That was the first stage of your job."

"First stage?"

"You'll be meeting your fellow anthropologists soon. With the body of knowledge you have on the Apollonian cultures, it is hoped you can do something for Earth."

"I don't understand."

"Basically, the major natural societies of Earth have been Dionysian. I say natural because the artificial totalitarian states are group-directed and hence might be considered Apollonian by some. But the group-direction must come from within, not from without. You understand?"

"No."

"Dionysian cultures are not stable; they don't last. The smaller they are, the quicker they dissolve into chaos. When they're large like ours, they might last a few thou-

sand years. Too easily, though, they lead to totalitarianism—like the tragic Communist movement of the twentieth century; that one nearly destroyed civilization, Ridley. Because technology has continued to improve, we may not be so lucky next time. That's where you anthropologists come in."

"I'm afraid I still don't follow you." It didn't sound as if he were being retired, Mr. Ridley decided.

"How do you convert a Dionysian culture, Ridley? I don't know. You don't, either, but you know more about it than I do. Together, you and all the other anthropologists might be able to do something—a conversion from the inside out. If it happens, your understanding of the Platians will help make it possible."

"If you're serious, Miss Younger-Koo, I—I don't know what to say. I thought..."

"That we were ungrateful? That you were being retired? They all do, but nothing could be further from the truth, Ridley. Your work is barely beginning. You see, until all you Apollonian anthropologists were ready, we have been maintaining the status quo on Earth; we've been conducting a civilization of three billion people by machinery. I mean that literally. The great cybernetics machines were a stop-gap until you people were ready. But they can't create. Without you, there is no progress. Do you think you can help us?"

"I'll have to see the others," Mr. Ridley said with growing excitement. "What Earth wants is a peaceful conversion to a true Apollonian state." He was thinking: *Plat, Plat, Earth can be ten million of you someday.*

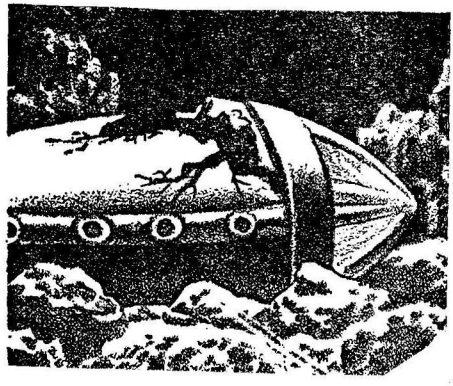
"That's the general idea. Something from Plat, which you studied. Something from each of the other Apollonian cultures. The synthesis might offer us the means of survival. Otherwise, Ridley, I'm afraid we're doomed to early extinction—at our own hand."

"I'd like to meet the others as soon as possible," Mr. Ridley said eagerly. It was like being born again.

"As soon as you get settled here in New York. We're bringing human ways back to Earth finally. The outworlds can be saddled with the machines for a while. We've been sending android administrators, so we could keep our best brains at home. Let the outworlds have the status quo for a while. That's why we've been sending robots like Adams to Plat."

★

A FABLE OF FUTURITY



THE THREE SPACEMEN

BY GEORGE HUDSON SMITH

ONCE UPON a time there were three spacemen sitting in front of a big TV set when the "Adventures of Captain Mars" was interrupted by a man who said that the President of the United States was going to speak to the people of the nation. The three spacemen pocketed their atomic blasters and looked at each other with various degrees of disgust on their chocolate-smeared faces.

"Gee, just when Captain Mars was gonna get the elephant man of Vega," moaned Jimmy Kenyon, beating his eight-year-old fists on the rug.

"Yeah. Who wants to hear the old President anyway," Don Finley yelled, and hopped up and down with impatience.

"Now we'll never know if Captain Mars gets to Pluto to rescue Little Comet and Europa Lil," Sid Hart said sadly, but he didn't move in the wheelchair in which he sat.

Martin turned to meet his wife's eyes and they smiled to cover their pain.

The President came on and began to speak slowly, em-

phasizing each word and lending impact to every phrase. "The return of the first unmanned rocket from its epic making moon-encircling trip marks the beginning of one of the truly great epochs in the history of mankind. It has seldom been given to a generation to be faced with a greater opportunity or a greater responsibility than ours...or maybe I should say that of our children..."

Martin Hart's eyes didn't watch the TV screen; they were fastened on the thin face and wasted body of his son.

"...The path to space is now open, but man is not yet ready to follow it. Years of study and experiment have convinced our scientists and engineers that the rigors of space-flight are beyond what man can now stand, are beyond our present physical capabilities..."

"Aw, I bet Captain Mars don't have no trouble," Don Finley said.

"An' I bet I could blast off like nothin' right now," Jimmy bragged.

"So could I, so could I," Sid echoed eagerly and his parent's eyes met again in a troubled way.

"...We have gone as far as we can with auto-controlled ships. In order to land, spaceships will have to have the guiding hand of human intelligence. Thus it is that I am today announcing the establishment of a United States Academy of Space. The business of this institution will be the training and conditioning of our finest youth for space."

"Boy oh boy," breathed Sid.

"Just like Captain Mars," Jim and Don said together dancing with excitement.

Sid leaned eagerly forward in his wheelchair as he said, "We're going to be spacemen! We're going to be spacemen!"

JIMMY turned to look at Sid. "Don and I are gonna be spacemen but you can't ever be, Sid. Why, you can't even get out of that old wheelchair; my dad says there ain't no cure for what you got."

"Jimmy, please!" Mrs. Hart said but it was too late. The damage had been done and Sid's face was already puckering with anger and tears. "I will, too, be a spaceman! I will, too! You just wait and see," he yelled.

The President was still talking. "At this great new Academy, the youth of America will be trained for the most wonderful adventure of

them all, the conquest of the planets. The men who will lead us in this conquest will be the most intelligent, the bravest, and the strongest of all the sons of earth."

Martha Hart's eyes rested on her son and she thought, *the most intelligent, the bravest, but not the strongest.*

The three spacemen grew up; Jim and Don went to the Space Academy. They studied Astronomy, Physics, Advanced Mathematics, Flight Technic and other related subjects.

But the bravest, the strongest and most intelligent of the sons of man couldn't go into space right away. Pyramiding research and newly-developed engineering technics only seemed to reveal more dangers, more barriers. Four manned rocket ships followed the first robot-controlled ship in its path around the moon. Only one came back and its crew had been reduced to cinders from the fall of almost meteoric velocity through the atmosphere.

They built new ships, and new young men from the Academy took them out into space. These were new ships from new designs, and in one of them Jimmy Kenyon died when a small meteor pierced the thin skin of his craft—just as he reached the moon. It took two more years before a ship made the trip and came back with her crew intact. The planets that had seemed so close a few years before, looked farther away than ever.

The generals and the politicians turned accusingly to the scientists and engineers, and said, "We've given you the money, good money that could have been spent on useful things like weapons, and buying elections, and what have you given us in return? Nothing but a barren and useless moon that can't even be made into the Fortress in the Sky we hoped it could."

The scientists and engineers shrugged their shoulders as they replied, "We expected too much too soon. We need more time in space, more experience to learn the proper technics and the proper designs but we can't get that experience because our men can't stand up under the strains involved."

"Then build robot ships that can," they were told.

"Robot ships aren't the answer; robot ships can never do the things that are needed. They can't make the landings or give us the space-trained minds we need to solve the problems."

"Then send the spacemen back to school and train them more thoroughly."

So Don Finley went back to the Space Academy with the others. He studied. Astrogation, Space Medicine, Planetary Ecology, Astrophysics and the like. The third spaceman, Sid Hart, also studied these subjects, but he did so in his wheelchair before the fire.

"Still the spaceman?" Don would ask in an amused but kindly voice when he happened to see Sid on his rare visits home.

"I'll go into space, someday," Sid would say with determination; "you'll see."

DON FINLEY went out on the third Mars expedition, and was among the five who came back alive when the ship had to turn back at the half way point. He got back alive but like the others he wasn't the same after that. He just sat on the porch in the sun and smiled childishly at the passersby. Sid could see him from his window when he had time to look up from his studies.

The generals and the politicians went to the scientists and engineers again, and this time it was with threats. No more money unless there were results. "Get us to Mars," they said. "Give us something to show for the billions you've spent. Use robots if necessary."

"Robots aren't satisfactory; we need human brains."

"Then get human brains!"

The scientists and engineers consulted with doctors and surgeons—especially neuro-surgeons—and six weeks later Sid Hart had two visitors.

They had with them the yellowed application Sid had filed with the Space Academy years before. When Martin Hart heard what they wanted, he was so enraged he almost threw them bodily out of the house. Then he saw the look on Sid's face and sat back down with visible effort to control himself.

"I want to go into space, Dad. I'm willing to go anyway that I can," Sid said.

"He's got the mind for it, Mr Hart," one of the visitors said. "And he's educated himself for it."

The other man looked at Sid's twisted body as he said, "He's got less to lose than any other boy would have."

"But our son," Martha Hart cried, "you're asking us to give up our only son."

"Not to give him up, really. You'll know where he is, and how he is, and he'll live longer this way than he could ever hope to otherwise. Besides he'll be the first human being to ever set foot on Mars."

"But you'll turn him into a mechanical monster," Martha wept.

"We're asking you to let your boy trade his crippled body for one of steel and fire. With a transplanted human brain to control a ship we can face and conquer the dangers of space. We can gain the knowledge that we need to design ships that will do the job with even such a delicate mechanism as the human body aboard."

"I'll do it, I'll do it," Sid said rapturously; "I've always known I'd do it some day."

His mother and father agreed reluctantly and the feeling that they were losing their son forever clung to them. It was intensified when they buried the husk that had been his body and knew that his brain was being installed in the giant steel body that was its new home.

The feeling persisted until the day they stood together at the spaceport and watched the big ship lift itself on flaming jets. They heard the song the jets sang and they knew that Sid was happy. And they knew that of all the sons of earth, theirs was the most intelligent, the bravest and...yes, the strongest.

★

NEXT TIME AROUND

Just as if it were planned to make a liar out of me, next issue's cover will be from Clifford D. Simak's feature novel, the title of which is yet to be settled as this issue goes to bed.

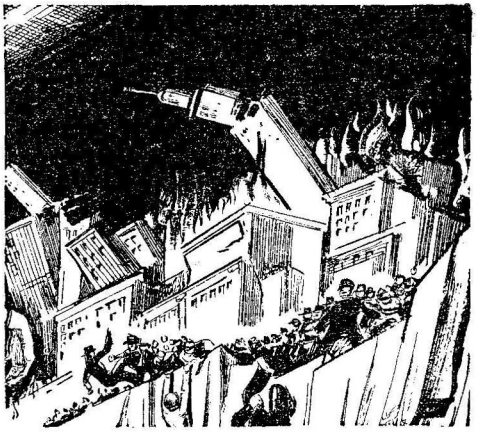
Morton Klass puts in one of his too-infrequent appearances with a memorable short story, "The Idealists". L. Sprague de Camp will be with us, with one of his fascinating, and doubtless to some, irritating articles.

Other items, of necessity remain uncertain; and the length and content of the letter department depends entirely upon you. Let's hear from you soon!

★ ★ ★ ★

DAY AFTER FEAR

by SAM MERWIN JR.



The trouble with the "Eat, Drink, and be Merry — for tomorrow we die", line is that so often we don't die after all.

THE SOUND of the rain woke her up. It pattered softly, insistently, on the brick of the terrace beyond the open french windows. Steadily, without discernible pattern, like the scurrying paws of millions of tiny animals over a dry forest floor. Like lemmings racing purposefully through the north woods toward the chill fjord waters waiting beyond the trees.

It was natural that she should think of lemmings, for her mind was still on death. She opened her eyes and looked out through the upended rectangle of the windows, at the even greyness of the clouds above the city from which the rain was falling steadily. It took long moments, by the tick of the ormolu clock on the marble mantel, for realization to come through.

The sky was no longer aflame.

The conflagration that had engulfed Earth's upper atmosphere for the past five days—the man-made bonfire in the heavens that was supposed to burn off the atmosphere of the planet, or poison it against all living thing —the great blaze that had made the days unearthly and the nights of a parade of hells was out.

Bara sat up, inhaled, and the air felt damp and cool

and pleasant in her nostrils. She stretched and eyed the familiar curve of her arm, her hand. Never before had she realized what a miracle of beauty and engineering a human hand was—or a leaf—or laughter—or the mere ability to breathe.

She peered at the ormolu clock through the greyness of the room and saw that its hands read 22 minutes past seven. In the morning, of course. It would be darker outside if it were evening. Besides, she had never slept the clock around in her life. Twenty-two minutes past seven, and she was alive on a world that was going to live after all.

...a world that was going to live after all!

It was like a blow in the stomach. Suddenly sick with guilt, she scrambled out of bed as if it were red hot. She had no business in this terrace apartment bedroom, she didn't even know whose place it was. She looked at its strangeness in terror, wondering about the people who lived here, why they had fled, when they would come back. Because, surely now that the world was no longer coming to an end, they would come back.

And find her here—with Pete.

She forced herself to look at him briefly, wondered why men who didn't snore looked like corpses when they slept. He lay on his side, perfectly still, an arm curved across his face; his coarse red hair sprouting above it. She wondered who he was, what his last name was.

He had known hers. He had called her Mrs. Lane when he took her elbow in his powerful fingers, as she fled blindly through the streets the night before, seeking she knew not what in her loneliness and panic. For the first four days she had not cracked—even though Frederick had left her, summoned by the larger responsibility that always called him from her side, that had called him even with the sky afire.

Damn Frederick! she thought. *Damn your nobility, your strength, your inhuman perfection!* If Frederick hadn't left her alone, she never would have cracked. She'd never have dared crack, never have dared give way to the fear that had gripped her insides, as it had gripped the insides of the world, since the sky caught fire.

And now, miraculously, the fire was out and she might well have destroyed herself with this rough, redhaired, unknown man named Pete. The clock read 24 minutes past seven as, with trembling,

inept fingers, she began silently to dress. She longed to turn on the big television console against the far wall and learn what had happened, but she dared not. It might wake up Pete. All she wanted was to get out of there, quickly, quietly, and get home and pick up whatever pieces of her life with Frederick were left.

The man named Pete stirred restlessly as she slipped from the room and, for a dreadful instant, she waited, jellied with fright. But he didn't wake, and she went on out without interference.

OUTSIDE, the city streets were aglow with rain. There was almost no traffic as she half-walked, half-ran the seven blocks to her home. Occasional other men and women moved passed her, their heads low as if they, like her, did not want to be seen and recognized. She saw only five wrecked and gutted cars and only six corpses. They looked like bundles of old clothes, caked with crimson turned a darker hue; they didn't look as if they had ever been human.

Mike, the doorman, lay sprawled, snoring, on one of the foyer settees. His usually-trim blue uniform was shamefully disheveled, and a quarter-full bottle of whiskey stood uncorked on the carpet beside him. Bara took the elevator to the fifteenth floor, then set the button that would send it back down as she stepped out. If possible, she didn't want anyone to know she was just coming in.

Just like any other faithless wife, she thought, and wondered how and why she could think of such tiny precautions.

The apartment needed a cleaning—Molly had not reported for work since the second day of the big fire—but it had not been looted. In some ritual of atonement, Bara put a few things superficially to rights. She emptied the clogged ashtrays in the silent butler, made the bed, dumped the dishes from the dining room table into the sink. Then she stripped off her clothing and took a bath.

She was curled up in the burgundy armchair, wearing her rose and gold-brocade housecoat—the one that buttoned all the way up to her throat—when Frederick came in. She didn't hear him enter over the noise the television was making. All of a sudden he was there, looking down at her. He said, "Bara, could we have something to eat?"

She turned on the small plastic radio in the kitchen, while she fried sausages and

scrambled eggs and got coffee and toast going. But instead of the news she was thirsting for, all she could get was a disc jockey. He had dug out an old record from back in the thirties, an apropos item that went, *"Pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and start all over again."* She found herself humming the catchy line as she worked.

In a way, she was glad Frederick had been so matter-of-fact. She couldn't have borne for him to embrace her just then—not after what had happened to her in the twelve hours just past. Besides, now that she thought of it, she was starved. She stirred the sizzling sausages with a spoon, carefully, so as not to split their skins; curiously, it felt real to be cooking again.

They ate, buffet style, on a coffee table in front of the television, and listened to the commentator. According to latest scientific report, the conflagration had been touched off by the explosion of an unmanned satellite rocket, sent high into the ionosphere from White Sands.

What had caused the explosion? No one knew. It could have been a scientist's miscalculation, a mechanic's mistake—or sabotage. Had the rocket flight been a success, had it settled in to permanent orbit, the United States would have had a commanding lead not only in the conquest of space but in control of the heavens. It was possible her enemies had taken steps.

Meanwhile, for years, both sides had been firing atomic waste matter out into space in ever-increasing quantities. It was too dangerous, too expensive, to bury properly; some of it, apparently, had not been fired far enough, but had dissipated in the atmosphere's upper reaches.

The explosion of the satellite rocket's atomic engine had detonated it in a chain reaction, and it had taken five days to burn itself out. It would be a long time before the full physical effects were studied and determined, but no lasting damage seemed to have been done—in the atmosphere.

Below, on Earth, demoralization had grown with each hour of the conflagration. Some had prayed; some had reveled; some had looted; some had slain. Wild revolt had erupted in the capitals of the Soviet satellite states. South Africa and Red China were in ferment. French Foreign Legionnaires had been massacred in Algiers. There was trouble in Moscow, but how much and of what nature was not yet known.

America, the commentator

said, appeared to have come through well.

BARA THOUGHT of those bodies, like bundles of old clothes, lying in the street. She thought of Pete's face, of the fierce savage glow in his eyes. She looked at Frederick, listening calm as a boulder while he wiped his lips neatly with a paper napkin.

She said, "I wonder if Dr. Kinsey's staff was operating full strength this past week."

It was an idle, mildly irrelevant remark—a typical Bara remark, she thought. But instead of ignoring it, as he usually did such remarks from her, Frederick looked at her as if she had slapped him. He said, with utterly unfamiliar fierceness, "It's not funny, you know."

For the first time since Bara had met and married Frederick, six years before, he looked vulnerable, like a little boy in trouble. She felt a sudden longing to mother him, to caress and calm him—but the swift shaft of her own guilt within her forbade such a move. She wondered how much he knew. He had asked no questions, nor had she; in view of what had happened, she decided it was probably better that way.

It was like Frederick not to tax her with questions or accusations. In his great strength, he could forgive, even ignore. But, since she loved him, as she had loved him for more than six years now, she wished he weren't quite so mature. That song—*"Pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and start all over again*—ran through her again. She said, "What's going to happen, Frederick?"

He looked at her thoughtfully, somberly, not seeing her. He said, "It's too early to tell. It may turn out to be a good thing; certainly, affairs couldn't be much worse than they were."

She listened to him as he talked on, wondering why she was unable to match his interest in what were to her remotely impersonal happenings. Mentally, she knew their importance as well as he—but emotionally, they meant nothing to her. It was, she supposed, a penalty of being a woman.

If only they had been able to have children... She wanted children, needed them. She had visited a half dozen specialists over the years in an effort to find out what was wrong—and their response had been unanimous. "There is nothing physically wrong with you, Mrs. Lane. Perhaps your husband..."

But how could you tell Frederick a thing like that?

She thought of Pete... It had simply not occurred to her as a possibility, not after these six sterile years with Frederick.

She looked at Frederick and wondered what she might have done to him. And then, because she was a woman in love and ashamed, she said, "Frederick, kiss me."

He stopped talking about the effect of even a brief breakdown in the industrial fabric and looked at her with mild surprise. Then he said, "Why, darling!"

As his arms went around her, she thought with something like triumph, *He hasn't called me "darling" in more than a year.*

AT QUARTER of five in the afternoon, three days later, Bara dropped into Frederick's office. She had been shopping downtown and decided to have a drink with her husband before going home. Thanks to the sales in the stores, following the Conflagration—they were already spelling it with a capital C—she had been able to pick up her entire fall wardrobe at about a third of the cost she had expected.

She was wearing a gay splashy print dress that did things for her figure and her vivid dark coloring. The dark-red silk stole slung jauntily across her shoulders and upper arms was new—purchased that afternoon. From the way the eyes of the men she passed on the sidewalk followed her, she knew she looked her best.

But the easy confidence of her walk was no deeper than the lipstick she wore—and could be as easily erased. With each passing day, with each passing hour, her insecurity was growing. Each time she caught a glimpse of a man with red hair, her insides froze—until, upon closer look, she saw it was not the man named Peter. As she turned in through the chromium and glass door of the building where Frederick had his office, she could have sworn she heard a hatefully familiar voice call out, "Mrs. Lane!" from behind her.

She forced herself to turn and survey the crowded sidewalk. Save for a detached, admiring glance or two, no man looked her way. Beyond the people stood a couple of taxicabs, beyond them the traffic, attaining its late rush-hour peak. She took a deep breath, ordered her hands to cease shaking, walked on slowly toward the elevators on the left of the lobby.

For Bara, as for the rest of the world, it had been a nervous, unsettling three days. *"Pick yourself up, dust your-*

self off, and start all over again." But how—and toward what? The planetwide wave of panic had done something to the world—its leaders, like its people, were resolved not to repeat their mistakes of the past, not to put themselves back on the same dismal dead-end street. But no one, yet, seemed to know where they were going.

At home, Bara had been torn between happiness and guilt. Frederick had never shown more warmth, more charm, more affection; yet she sensed an underlayer of desperation here that she did not understand or dare investigate. Was Frederick, awakened by the reaction from fear, merely anxious to make up for the years with her he had wasted? Or was he, aware of her guilt, desperately trying to show her he was more man than whomever she might have sinned with?

And Pete, wherever he was, whoever he was—how had he known her name?

For the two hundredth time, she wished Frederick had stayed with her, had not let his sense of responsibility toward his staff and his clients pull him back to the office during that dreadful last day the heavens blazed. Yet, had he stayed with her, he would not have been Frederick, steady, thoughtful, rock-firm Frederick. And surely, his having done his duty, was poor excuse for what she had done.

BARA SLIPPED in through the side door, rather than through the office foyer. And there, in the smaller room that housed Frederick's secretary and files, she stopped dead in astonishment.

Miss Winters, the imperturbable, the ever-competent, the sheathe-hard sexy Miss Winters, was sitting behind her desk, sobbing into a handkerchief. She lifted her brassy blonde head and looked her hatred at Bara through mascara run amok. She said, "You didn't have to get me fired!"

Bara said, "Let's have it again—more slowly."

"You didn't have to get me fired!" the perfect secretary repeated fiercely. "I didn't ask for it to happen—besides, nothing did happen. Frederick and I were both too scared. We just got drunk and passed out in my place. Lord knows, I wanted him to love me— I've been in love with him for years—but he was too scared. He was like a scared kid—all to pieces. He kept saying, 'I can't let Bara see me like this. You've got to take care of me.' Well, I took care of him—why shouldn't I? —and he blabbed

to you and you had him fire me."

Bara sat down. She had to —it was so stunning, so unexpected. And with a sob, Miss Winters lurched up and hurried from the room. Looking after her, Bara wondered if anyone had ever called her husband anything but his full name—Frederick.

The door opened and he came in, saying, "I'm sorry, Lucy, but you'll have to keep your voice down. I don't want—"

He broke off abruptly as he saw her sitting there. Then he said quietly, a little hopelessly, "So she was talking to you."

Bara looked at her husband and, in her sympathy for the misery he must be in, felt some new wellspring of affection, deep within her, spring into quivering life. She rose and went to him and put an arm through his and said, "I'm sorry, Fred. I had no idea."

"Didn't you?" he asked. "Oh, it isn't that I love Miss Winters. If I did, I wouldn't think of letting her go. And don't worry, I've paid her off well; she'll be okay."

Bara thought, *Will she?* But she didn't say so. There were limits to how generous any woman could be with a husband she loved.

He went on, talking rapidly, not like himself, "You were so inhumanly brave about it all that I couldn't bear the thought of letting you see how scared I was. And then Miss Winters—Lucy—but I swear nothing happened. I just got drunk."

Bara wanted to say, "*You* were scared! What do you think I was? And I didn't dare let you see it, because I thought you'd feel contempt for my weakness."

But instead, bright-eyed with the fulness of revelation and a supressed desire to burst out laughing with relief, she said, "What we both need is a drink."

He was pathetically humble in his gratefulness. He said, "And you're not going to hold it against me?"

She said, "Wait till next month's bills come in." And then, because she was sorry for Miss Winters, she said so.

Frederick looked at her and said, "I know—but under the circumstances I can't possibly keep her. I'll get my hat. Pete should be downstairs with his cab."

Pete!

The name rang through her whole being like the vibration of a Chinese gong. The cab driver who usually brought Frederick—he wasn't Fred now in her thoughts—home from work. No wonder

he had known who she was. And she had heard his voice as she came through the glass and chromium door downstairs. Until this moment, he had been merely a faceless nonentity.

As they rode down in the elevator, she sought frantically for some way out of the meeting that lay ahead of her. For she hadn't the slightest doubt that it would be *the* Pete. Yet no way out presented itself to her—and each passing second brought the inevitable closer.

"Are you all right, darling?" Frederick asked her s o l i c i t o u s l y when they emerged into the lobby.

Something about his tone—its very solicitousness, perhaps—r e s t o r e d her poise. Again she took a deep breath. She knew who was really the stronger of the two of them now—and this was no time for weakness. She smiled up at him and said, "I'm fine. I was just trying to decide between an old fashioned and a daiquiri."

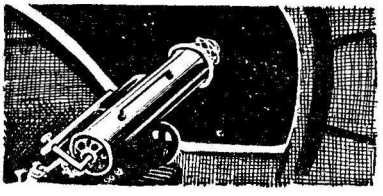
"You're a wonder, Bara," said Frederick.

They got into the cab. It was Pete. She suppressed a shudder at sight of that dreadfully familiar red hair, that rough-cut face beneath with its redhead's pallor. Pete said courteously, "Evening, Mr. Lane—e v e n i n g Mrs. Lane. Where to?"

"Where to, darling?" Frederick asked, settling himself in the far corner.

She met Pete's hazel eyes in the little mirror atop the windshield. She s h i v e r e d Then, gathering herself together, "The Plaza, driver—and step on it!"

★



Old Beaver was around back in the days when they still had winters, in a city called New York.

Our nomination for the most fascinatingly outrageous idea of the year, in science fiction.

THE OLDEST MAN IN THE WORLD

by RUSS WINTERBOTHAM

LIFE MUST have been very uncomplicated 50 or 60 million years ago, when there were only two or three thousand years of history behind the human race. In fact, most of the history that is written began in the Year 1, although there are legends of certain events before that.

Nowadays, even to look up an event that happened in the year 52,000,000 requires the use of an electronic index and travel through acres of libraries in various parts of the world. But this is no history lesson; it's an account of a man named Alexis Beaver.

Alex, as we called him, startled the scientific world of the year 62,489,003 with a paper on radioactivity in nature in which he stated that mankind had created an artificial group of elements called the neptunium series during the fourth decade, or perhaps the fifth, of the Twentieth Century—or perhaps the Twenty-first.

There's hardly any use nowadays for radioactivity, since most of the work in that field is taken care of by the Pindamond tube. Nevertheless, some of the space moguls thought it might not be a bad idea to sell natural radioactivity to some of the backward planets in the galaxy, that didn't have the skill and the industrial capacity to use more modern power sources.

"Charles," the boss said to me, "why don't you get together the facts on the subject and write a little brochure for the knuckleheads in other worlds? I'm sure we could make a lot of money on the deal."

The boss, of course, never

missed an angle and he was always keen on making a pile of money—providing I would do the work. But the idea of going back 62 and a half million years into history looked like a pretty big task. I'm thirty years now, and I'd be an old man before I found out how the savages of the Twentieth Century split an atom.

But the boss never thinks of these things, and he was too busy to listen to reason. Being an intelligent young man, I took a short-cut; I went to see Alexis Beaver. He seemed to know something about the subject or he'd never have mentioned it.

It took a little time to find him. I hunted through technological directories and so on, but he wasn't mentioned. Then it occurred to me to look in the city directory and there he was; he had the vending machine concession in City Park.

He was sitting on a park bench, feeding salted peanuts to the pigeons. He looked like a nice, kind old gentleman, somewhere in his early fifties. He was rather neatly dressed and he wore old fashioned spectacles, rather than taking nasty eye-adjustment pills, I suppose. I told him my name was Charles Prentiss of Stability Brochures, Inc., and I was going to do a series on natural radioactivity.

"Don't get that stuff started again, boy," said Alexis. He had a foghorn voice that startled me at first. But the pigeons didn't seem to mind it.

"Why not?" I asked.

"It's a nightmare; threatened the world once."

"I think the human race is smarter now," I said.

Alexis shook his head. "Not the race as a whole. Some people, maybe; but when you take in everybody, they aren't a bit smarter than they were when I was a boy."

I grinned. "I'm talking about 60-odd million years ago, sir; not half a century."

He shook his head and then ducked as a pigeon flew over his head. Then he looked off at the clouds with a dreamy expression on his face. "You and I are talking about the same thing, son. I was born in 1936."

I was pretty sure then that I was dealing with a nut, and I doubted if there ever was such a thing as natural radioactivity. Yet... Beaver's paper had appeared in a pretty reputable scientific journal, and so I decided to make a last check—just to show the boss. But strangely enough, this journal did have some authentic material on natural radioactivity. They even had photographs of an explosion in Nevada *circa* 1950, which

was supposed to have been set off by radioactive materials.

So I went to work on the case with an electronic index, and before long I had a list of literature on the subject. The trouble was that it was in about a dozen libraries scattered all over the world, instead of being in one place. It seems that, for nearly five thousand years, each nation collected its own information on the subject and kept it secret from everybody else. Nobody had ever gone to the trouble to sort out duplications, and so it was up to poor little Charley to skim through all of it.

Because it was the natural thing to do, I started with the library right here in town. I filled out the right forms, and so on, and presently I had a whole section of filing-cabinets all to myself. I started digging out microfilm information, handicapped by the fact that everything was written in a dead language called English, and I couldn't understand a word of it—much less read it.

It seems like there was an atomic war sometime about this period. Only a couple of nations were wiped out, so it didn't amount to much. But upon looking at some of the maps, I was impressed by certain features that were clearly inaccurate. It showed Cuba a considerable distance from the North Pole, and South America was partly below the Equator. But considering their primitive methods, I suppose the savages of those days did quite well with their map-making.

I felt in no hurry to learn the secret of natural radioactivity, and besides I had to learn archaic English before I learned anything; so I decided to spread out a little and find out some more about the days when men were primitive people.

I got to studying photographs through the projector, and noting the curious costumes and things. And then, suddenly, I saw Alexis Beaver.

IT WAS some sort of a sporting event called a World Series, whatever that is, in 1985; Alexis was dressed in a white apron and carrying a big tray of some kind of beverage through the crowd. I suppose they had no drinking fountains in those days, and so people who attended these affairs had to have their water brought to them in containers.

At first I didn't believe it was Alexis, but the picture was so much like him—even to the old fashioned spectacles—that I was convinced. Furthermore, he had said him-

self that he was born in 1936; and in 1985, he'd have been about 49 years old, just a few years younger than he looked now.

But was it possible for a man to live 62,487,067 years? If it were, I was sure there would be a hell of a lot more money in a brochure on that than in one about artificial radioactivity for a bunch of backward planets.

I got the boss on the telephone. "Say, boss," I said.

"Hello, Charley? Got that brochure on the atom splitting yet?"

"Great gad, boss, I haven't even found out for sure that they created artificial elements."

"Why haven't you? Listen, Charley, this stuff is hot; if we don't get our licks in on it, somebody else is going to come along and—"

"Nobody's going to do *anything* in less than fifteen years," I said. "Everything written about it is in dead languages."

"What do you expect me to do? Teach you how to read them? Go out and learn the languages. What am I paying you for?"

"I've got something hotter, boss. I've found a man who knows how to live forever."

The wire was dead for a minute while the boss soaked it up. "You what?" He'd heard me, but he was stalling while he thought.

"I've been talking to him. He was born in 1936. That's zero-zero-zero-zero-one-nine-three-six. Sixty-two million, four hundred eighty-seven thousand and sixty-seven years ago."

"Charley," said the boss, "you've been chewing betel nuts."

"All right," I said. "Fire me. I'll go to another publisher; he'll make a pile of money and you'll die of a broken heart."

"Come into the office, Charley," the boss said. "Even if I can see your face on the visiplate, I've got to know your blood pressure and test your reflexes before I believe a word of it."

Before I went back I went to city park where I found Alex on the same bench feeding what looked like the same pigeons. "Listen, Mr. Beaver," I said to him, "do you want to make a pile of money?"

Alex shook his head. "I've got some money; I've saved a few dollars every year of my life."

I whistled. Even if he'd saved only a dollar a year, he would be one of the richest men in the world in 60 million years.

"Well, then," I asked, "do you want to do the world a favor?"

"What for?" asked Alex, which sounded like a pretty reasonable question.

"Alex, you've lived a long time. I work for a publisher and we want to tell people how you did it."

It's a funny thing about people. They may not want anything else, but they like to have their name in print.

"I'd like to do it, son," said Alex, "but I got to warn you first."

"Okay—warn me, and then let's get started."

"Tain't as simple as that. I'm what you call a Jonah; I've had hard luck all my life."

"That's an understatement, isn't it, Mr. Beaver?" I asked. "You're one of the richest men in the world; and you've lived longer than anybody else; and you're still going strong—and you claim you're unlucky."

"I've got an accident bent," said Alex. "I never did anything in my life that I didn't do wrong. I can't even die proper."

"Did you ever try it?"

"I was in the atomic war of '89," he said. "I got caught in the middle of the meteor shower in 1,098,442. I was frozen in the Cuban glacier for two weeks in the year 2,000, 001. I got sent to jail for thirty years at the start of the 2008th millenium and I've had the German measles half a million times, pneumonia 742 times, broke my neck seven times, and had leprosy once."

"Great gad," I said, which was all I could say.

"I don't dare move around much, because I'm always stumbling and hurting myself. The only thing I can do is feed pigeons."

I sucked in my breath. "Don't let anybody tell you you didn't warn me. Now take my arm, Mr. Beaver, and I won't let you stumble. We'll call a taxi—"

"Uh-uh," said Alex. He put two fingers to his lips and blew a shrill whistle. From a clump of trees a little way off, a uniformed man appeared pushing a wheelchair. "That's Donigan, my caretaker," he said. "The most careful man alive."

DONIGAN assisted Alex into the wheelchair and pushed him over to the park landing field where Alex's helicopter was parked.

Then we were flown without a hitch to the Brochure building, and landed on the roof. Once more Alex got into the wheelchair and we boarded the descentator, which took us directly to the boss' office.

The boss was taking vitamin pills when we came in the door. He saw Alex in the wheelchair and nodded. "Is that him?"

I said yes and Alex got out of the chair; immediately he tripped and fell flat on his face. Donigan picked him up and brushed him off.

"He's a little weak," the boss said, "but he looks good for 60 million years."

"I'm in a hell of a lot better shape than you are, you bloated moneybag," said Alex. He took a step toward the boss, stumbled, but Donigan caught him.

"You can't even walk," said the boss.

"He's got an accident prone, or accident bent, or something," I said. "You know they say that ten percent of the people cause and have 90 percent of the accidents. It's supposed to be psychological, but scientists have never been sure just what it is."

"Have we got a brochure on it?" the boss asked.

"No," I said. "Who cares about an accident till he has one?"

"We might try to sell a few copies and find out," said the boss.

"I'm no psycho," said Alex. "I'm just unlucky."

"How'd you happen to live sixty million years?" the boss asked. "Bad luck?"

"You can't have everything," said Alex.

While the boss chewed his lip, I told him about Alex Beaver. I had brought the microfilm along from the library and I showed it on the projector. Alex recognized his picture. "I sold hot dogs and beer at Ruth Stadium from 1980 till the atomic war broke out in '89," Alex said.

The boss squinted real hard at Alex. "You know what I think, Mr. Beaver? I don't think you're a damn year older than I am."

"What outfit were you in during the atomic war?" Alex asked.

The boss turned to me. "Was there such a thing?"

I shrugged. "You know they don't teach kids stuff like that in school. They only go in for the important stuff."

"If you'd ever been in an atomic war," said Alex, "you'd know how *unimportant* it was. Two nations got wiped out complete."

"That's right," I said. "I did find that out in the library today. There were pictures and maps."

"Tell me more," said the boss. He sat down in a chair and without being asked Donigan brought up another for Alex to sit in. Alex sat down without hurting himself; but it was a narrow squeak, because his foot slipped.

FOR ABOUT an hour Alex told us things about history that we never heard be-

fore. For instance, there was the meteor shower. It lasted more than a million years and made the earth a couple of thousand miles larger all around. That was why Cuba is now up near the North Pole, and South America is north of the equator. Before then, Antarctica was covered with ice; now it reaches almost to the tropics.

The meteor shower, and some other things, slowed down the earth so that its day lengthened from 24 to 36 hours; and it even changed the length of the year—in hours, not in days. But it did help in getting rid of a few leap years; now we only have one every four centuries instead of one every four years.

It was real interesting and the boss said so. "The trouble is, you can't prove any of it happened to you. I don't even know if it happened, but it's probably in the library somewhere. So many more important things have happened in the past sixty million years that nobody cares about that little stuff."

"Just what do you call *important?*" asked Alex.

"A lot of nice people have lived and died, for one thing," said the boss; "a lot of good books have been published."

"And the atom bomb was forgotten!" Alex said. "Now to me, that's important."

"A good book is a lot more important than a bomb," said the boss.

Alex nodded slowly. "I guess maybe you've got something. I never thought of it in just that way." He got that far-away look in his eyes again. "I guess the sixty million years haven't been wasted."

"But the trouble is," the boss went on, "we've got to *prove* that you lived a million years. Got a birth certificate?"

Alex shook his head. "It was burnt up in the atom war of '89. I never bothered to get a new one until I was too old for anybody to believe that I'd lived so long."

"How about that picture I got? The one showing Alex—Mr. Beaver selling—well, whatever it was—"

"Beer and hot dogs at the World Series in '85," said Alex.

"It's easy to fake a picture," said the boss. "Even if we did prove it was genuine, who can say it really was Mr. Beaver? After all two people *can* look alike, and live sixty-million years apart."

"There is a way to prove it," said Alex. "But it's a sort of indirect procedure."

"How?" asked the boss.

"By a little known fact of science that probably has been forgotten along with a lot of other unimportant things,"

said Alex. "It's known as the Coriolis forces."

"Get on with it, man," said the boss. "Do you need equipment?"

"The only equipment has been here longer than I have," said Alex. "It's the earth itself."

"Too bad. I guess that lets us out; we don't own it."

ALEX EXPLAINED that we didn't have to own the earth. "You see, the earth, turns on its axis. That sets up forces that have nothing to do with gravity, and they are called Coriolis forces. They cause whirlpools to turn one direction north of the equator, and the other south of the equator. They cause the trade winds. They have certain effects on bodies of water—such as causing streams to erode the western bank more rapidly than the eastern bank. And they effect the motions of pendulums."

"Ah! Pendulums," said the boss. "We got a clock to tell us how old you are?"

"No," said Alex. "You've got my accident bent. You see I was born back in 1936, when the earth turned on its axis in 24 hours, or thereabouts. My habits were fixed and established before the meteor showers and the ice ages came along that changed the length of the day, and the movement of the earth on its axis. For all I know, the axis was changed, too. At any rate, these forces acted on me although I was never conscious of it. When the earth slowed down, I kept on with my reflexes tuned to a stronger force. As a result I'm always fumbling, stumbling, falling and so on. I'm always overshooting my mark toward the east, because I can never get used to the slower rotation of the earth."

"And that proves you're sixty million years old?"

"It proves I was born before the meteor showers, which started in 1,098,442. If I can't prove I'm 62 million years old, I can show that at least I'm 61 million."

"Sure, boss," I said. "Who'd call us a liar for a million years?"

"I would," said the boss. "If another publisher came out with that kind of stuff, I'd laugh him out of business."

"I guess I'll go back and feed my pigeons," said Alex.

"Have they got anything to do with your long life?"

"No, they're for my old age," said Alex.

"Huh?" I was beyond a four letter "what."

"They're building me a little nest egg," Alex said. "Not a pun exactly. You see, I own a hat-cleaning establishment

across the street from the park."

"Get out of here," said the boss.

Donigan said, "Tsk, tsk," took Mr. Beaver by the arm, and helped him into the wheelchair. He blocked a stumble in such a manner that I could see that Donigan was worth a great deal to a person with an accident bent.

The boss didn't even bid them g o o d b y. "Coriolis forces!" he snarled. "Accident prones!"

"There might be something in it, boss," I said.

"Get back to that radioactivity project, or you won't even live to a ripe young age," he said, and that was that.

"I'll be old before I ever dig up all the facts on atom splitting," I told him.

"You'll never get old. If bungling made Alex Beaver live so long, you'll live a hundred million years longer."

I never did find out what it was that really made Alex so old, but someday I'll go back to city park and ask him. I'm too busy now learning how to split an atom.

Probably it was an accident. People who are accident prones sometimes have the damndest accidents.

★

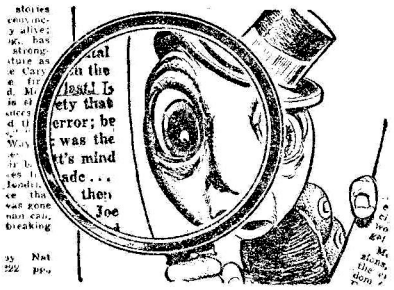
THE ANNUAL CONVENTION

The 13th World Science Fiction Convention will be held September 2, 3, 4 and 5, 1955, at the Hotel Manger in Cleveland, Ohio. Dr. Isaac Asimov has been selected as the guest of honor for this year, and Anthony Boucher will be toastmaster at the traditional banquet.

If you want to get in on this event, send in $2 now to the 13th World Science Fiction Convention, care of Ben Jason (Treasurer), Box 508, Edgewater Branch, Cleveland, Ohio. This will cover your registration, and you will receive all publications and information concerning the affair which have been issued this year.

You'll also have a vote in the special Achievement Awards, whether you attend the convention itself, or not.

★ ★ ★ ★



READIN' and WRITHIN'

Book Reviews by Damon Knight and Robert W. Lowndes

THE LONG way back, by Margot Bennett. Coward-McCann, $3.50.

Grame was a young mechanical-repetitive worker who had taught himself science; he longed to be a cosmic-ray investigator. But in the stable, bored civilization of Africa, centuries after the fabled Big Bang, there was no room at the top; the machine refused to regrade him. Three times in the last week Grame had hung the Drunk and Angry sign on the door of his hut; he had sworn to become a physicist or die. But when he was thrown a scrap—a place in the first post-bang expedition to savage Britain—he took it. Along with Valya, the dedicated spinster, ugly Hep, the zoologist, and a faceless pack of others, he climbed into the Amphibian and flew northward.

—And as they fly, this novel follows them out of the most fascinating imaginary civilization of recent memory, into a series of jungle adventures which, in spite of all this charming writer can do, are much like other jungle adventures.

The first three chapters are a continuous delight. In dagger-sharp, feather-light little touches, the author gives us the Africans' social habits, religion (the Noble Abstraction), government — and such casual glances at their history as this:

> *"Have you heard the latest ghastly news? A couple of domesticated lions have got loose in the nature reserve. If we don't watch out they'll breed. Can you imagine lions loose in the reserve! They might turn positively vicious. If something isn't done, they'll get through the fence and eat all our Boers, and then what will happen to anthropology?"*

Apparently feeling that to dwell too long with her Africans would be to dispel their mystery, Miss Bennett has fallen into the greater error of the Transition Ad Nauseam: instead of going directly to

her protagonists' destination, she takes them the long back way around, through hardship, attack by animals, sickness, and then for variety, hardship, attack by animals and sickness again.

This pit yawns for every writer who has misread Burroughs or Haggard in his youth. In many a classic romance, adventures in the wilderness were not padding; they were what the story was about. In modern science-fantasy, when the subject is the manners and morals of people in a future society, such arbitrary plot-spinning is a method of wasting space.

Miss Bennett has wasted about nine chapters of it—more than half the book. Midway, the story picks up again when the brown explorers enter a melancholy village of cave-dwelling Britons, with habits as peculiar in their own dismal way as the Africans' own; but then off they go through that damned jungle, in which every square inch is like every other.

Before this monotony, Miss Bennett's wit fades; the characters' speech lapses—even at those times when none of them is dramatically delirious—into a kind of pidgin African:

> "Soon we'll be in Africa," he whispered. "Forever. Not for everyone's ever. Only for our ever. Other people's ever is very different, like their now..."

Having plucked the most interesting Briton out of his environment, so that (like all the others) he has nothing to do that any other faceless character couldn't, the author is forced to fall back on a tardy, hastily-manufactured and embarrassingly phony love affair between Valya and Grame.

—And all this just to discover in the end, what every reader knew all along, that the Britons extinguished themselves with the the atomic weapons which the Africans are just developing.

At story's end, Grame, Valya and Hep are heading back to Africa, where the reader, to his frustration, senses that they will immediately become fascinating, believable people again.

If only we could follow them there—or if only they had never left home!

HOLE IN HEAVEN, by F. Dubrez Fawcett. London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 9/6 (about $1.30).

This extraordinary story is the first in a series of British science fiction novels to be edited by Angus Wilson, who might have done better to label this one "superstition fiction." Its subject is nothing less than the possession, by a powerful bodiless spirit from Somewhere, of a dying man's body.

Unlike Miss Bennett's novel, this one begins badly and gets slowly better. Fawcett's style gives a banal effect; his characters appear at first to be pure stereotypes—a stage Irish girl, a stage Jew, and a stage Scotsman, among others. His narrative is a patchwork quilt, with twenty different viewpoints to the yard, stitched together with summaries, anticipations, moralizing, anything handy.

And yet, as the author slowly builds up his gallery of grotesques —Dr. Hyman, the dope-taking hospital head; publicity-mad Intern Leonidas Lipwade (who comes to a most horrible end), dog-faced Vicar Glassbrow, and the rest— the reader comes to the uncomfortable realization that they are really not grotesques at all, nor stereotypes either. The author has simply excluded the dedicated doctor, the selfless pastor, the crusading newpaper editor and other rarities about whom polite writers tell us so often, and has given us the

remainder—the mediocre, the venal, the meanly ambitious with whom, as the editor rightly notes, we have to do in our daily lives.

The possessed man, Nemo, would do almost enough if he only stirred up this colorful ant's nest of little men; but Fawcett has developed him into a character of singular power in his own right. Nemo is that chilling and rare thing, a genuinely alien being. The conclusions he reaches in his study of our race are, as we would expect, cold-bloodedly accurate; and yet—alone among the super-menaces I can recall—he leaves the reader no sneaking wish at all for his victory over humanity.

The copious notes he leaves behind him are nearly all burned. I hate this device—it's so corny, and as a rule so unnecessary—but in this case, given the opportunity, I think I would have burned them myself.

If the weird movie cycle ever comes back into its own (leaving science fiction to say something, instead of scaring people), this story ought to make a gorgeous specimen.

TIMELINER, by Charles Eric Maine. Rinehart, $2.75.

The only thing worse than a bad American novel is a bad British one. Something in the nation's towering literary tradition must give grubstreeters a reckless feeling; when a Briton lowers himself to write tripe, he does it with a will.

The present example is that sort of amateur flight of fancy that takes leave of its premises, and its senses, in the second chapter. Almost anything can then happen, except the unexpected. Here, the assumption is that a scientist working with "dimensional quadrature" is flung forward in time, to a period where his consciousness ousts that of another man; and when that man dies, the protagonist leaps forward again, and so on, always crowding out somebody close to a woman who resembles the protagonist's wife. Beyond this, the plot is not worth examining, but here are some random samples:

Page 116: "*Abruptly he saw the significance of that first incredible transition: it meant he was dead! The real Hugh Macklin had perished in the capsule four hundred years ago.*"

This has been obvious to the reader for exactly eighty-eight pages.

Page 154: "'*...But we have no alternative. If you abolish compulsory euthanasia and the principle of social utility, then you must restrict population by controlling birth. In twenty years, eighty per cent of the people would be middle-aged and old, and there would be insufficient children to maintain the population level. Where does that get us?*'"

Nowhere, inasmuch as the speaker (and the author) is using "controlling birth" as if it meant "abolishing birth."

Page 183: "'*How did you come to travel through time?*'

'*By dimensional quadrature,*' *Macklin replied.*

Beautiful: "By dimensional quadrature," i. e. by the fourth dimension, i. e. time — or, "How did you travel through time?" "By time travel."

THE BODY SNATCHERS, by Jack Finney. Dell, 25¢.

The author of several of the slicks' most beautifully made short fantasies (including the classic "I'm Scared") has here put to-

gether, with equal skill, a Hollywood parody of science fiction.

In the little town of Santa Mira, Calif., a curious psychic epidemic occurs: ordinary, sensible people will come to a doctor and doggedly confess they believe some member of their family to be an impostor. He looks like my Uncle Ira, they'll say, talks like him, knows everything he should — but it isn't Uncle Ira.

Young Dr. Miles Bennell turns his first case over to a psychiatrist friend and forgets it, until another friend calls him to witness an appalling sight: a human body, neither living nor dead, which isn't quite human—not fully formed, a blank waiting for individuality to be stamped on it. Slowly, they come to realize the hideous truth—the people of Santa Mira are being systematically copied and replaced by strange vegetable pods from space, which have the power to reproduce any living thing to the last atom. To anticipate a little, this is how it works:

> ... *"So it can happen, Doctor Bennell, and rather easily; the intricate pattern of electrical force-lines that knit together every atom of your body to form and constitute every last cell of it — can be slowly transferred. And then, since every kind of atom in the universe is identical — you are precisely duplicated, atom for atom, molecule for molecule, cell for cell, down to the tiniest scar or hair on your wrist. And what happens to the original? The atoms that formerly composed you are — static now, nothing, a pile of gray fluff ..."*

The town of Santa Mira, where this horror happens, is so real that you can close your eyes and see it. The people, too, are solid, living and breathing: Finney writes so vividly that his story carries utter conviction ... until you stop to think.

The quotation above is one very small example. In the second sentence, the key one, what Finney says about atoms is simply, flatly, *not* true.

If this seems trivial, take another example: the seed pods, says Finney, drifted across interstellar space to Earth, propelled by light pressure. This echoes a familiar notion, the spore theory of Arrhenius. But the spores Arrhenius referred to are among the smallest living things—small enough to be knocked around by hydrogen molecules in the upper atmosphere, and so escape to space; and small enough—with a surface-to-mass ratio so large—that light will propel them against the force of gravitation.

In confusing these minute particles with three-foot seed pods, Finney invalidates his whole argument—and makes ludicrous nonsense of the final scene in which the pods, defeated, float up into the sky to hunt another planet.

Worse, almost from the beginning the characters follow the author's logic rather than their own. Bennell and his friends the Belicecs, intelligent and capable people, exhibit an invincible stupidity whenever normal intelligence would allow them to get ahead with the mystery too fast.

When they have four undeveloped seed pods in their hands, for instance, they do none of the obvious things—make no tests, take no photographs, display the things to no witnesses. Bennell, a practicing physician, never thinks of X-raying the pods.

And they destroy all four pods before these can come to maturity. This makes excellent sense from

the author's point of view. He knows that allowing a pod to mature would mean the death of one of his chief characters: but they don't know it.

Bennell makes a phone call to a Pentagon officer he knows, and gets no satisfaction for obvious reasons: Belicec then tries to call the FBI, but discovers that the pod-creatures are now in control of the local telephone exchange.

So they all pile into a car and run for it. The author's purpose in this is served once they get out of town—he wants to show you the deteriorating condition of the one feeder road that gives access to Santa Mira—so when they have got out, and slept overnight in a motel, they turn around and go back. Why don't they call the FBI from an out-of-town phone? No reason; they just don't.

The big climactic scenes follow —all of them fine drama—as the pods' investiture of the town becomes complete. Bennell and his girl, the last two human beings left, are at least following their own logic in trying to escape—except when they visit a college professor because he can tell the reader something about the origin of the pods, and for no other evident reason. But the ending, also dramatic (and great for wide screen), leases a sour taste.

> *... the pods could tell with certainty that this planet, this little race, would never receive them, and would never yield. And Becky and I, in refusing to surrender, but instead fighting their invasion to the end, giving up any hope of escape in order to destroy even a few of them, had provided the final and conclusive demonstration of that fact. And so now, to* survive— *their one purpose and function —the great pods lifted and rose, climbing up through the faint mist, on and out toward the space they had come from ....*

Nuts. If Finney's nightmare had actually happened, and nobody concerned had had the God-given sense to holler cop, we would all be pods by now—and deserve it.

BALLANTINE'S latest one-author collection is "Of All Possible Worlds," by William Tenn. For my taste the best of the seven stories are the grisly, deeply moving "Down Among the Dead Men," (from *Galaxy*) and that explosively bitter tract disguised as a funny story, "The Liberation of Earth," (from *Future Science Fiction*).

Fantasy Press's Arthur Lloyd Eshbach has issued a volume of his own short stories and novelettes, dating from as early as 1932. The title story, "Tyrant of Time," is a fascinating period piece, notable for some of its ideas, which anticipated later and more famous stories. The price is $3.00.

"All About the Future," Martin Greenberg's latest anthology (Gnome, 374 pp., $3.50) contains six long-novelettes, of which one is mine; the others are by Pohl, Anderson, Sturgeon, Jameson and Miller. For good measure, there are reprint, introductions by Heinlein and Asimov, and Edward Wellen's scholarly "Excerpts From Encyclopedia of Galactic Culture."

Another new Gnome release is Groff Conklin's "Science Fiction Terror Tales" ($3.50), which is just about what the title implies —fifteen spine-chillers, all possible to cram into a loose definition of science fiction, of which the most impressive to me are Hein-

lein's "They" and Peter Phillips' "Lost Memory."

Both of these books are well printed on regrettably poor paper.*

Completists may want "The Pocket Book Magazine, No. 2" (35¢), for an article about scientific needs by Martin Gardner, and a curt survey of cybernetics by Norbert Weiner. I think this curious publishing venture is neither fish nor fowl, myself. D. K.

*(Readers who aren't interested in holes in their pockets to match holes in their heads can obtain "Science Fiction Terror Tales" in a neat Pocketbook edition, same type and better paper, for 25¢. At this price, it's a good buy. RWL)

HELL'S PAVEMENT, by Damon Knight. Lion Library, 35¢.

The utopia-in-reverse novel is usually little more believable than its all-too-saintly obverse, for much the same reasons. Various religious teachers, philosophers, and psycho-therapists etc., have assured us that human beings are basically "good"; that is, if environmental conditions—the world into which children are born with the parents and other influences they actually have—were somehow changed, then we would all just naturally love each other and never desire or dream of doing ill unto each other, etc. Utopian novels in the past have tried to reduce such evil influences into various single causes, from economic conditions to toilet training, and have depicted societies which were ideal and perfect, because the great evil had been eliminated.

It isn't believable, partly because all historic attempts to found brave new societies which theoretically eliminated the root evil found that human behaviour and motivation was pretty much the same whether people were ruled by a single monarch, an obligarchy of true "elite" (genuinely wise and devoted people), a political party with a new creed, a theocracy, or an economic system wherein all were "equal", etc.

On the other hand, there is no record of any organized and systematized tyranny which has been able to make man absolutely evil, or to crush all human hopes for that evanescent thing we call "justice", which we can never define fully, and yet which can usually be made recognizable and communicable among human beings—however diverse their backgrounds—on some level of abstraction if not on the ideally philosophical and absolute one. We know that there were basically "good" people in Nazi Germany; we know that Hitler himself was capable of kindness and good will at times, and that the devotion he inspired in his followers was not solely an appeal to their destructive drives. The same can be said of Mussolini, Stalin, and every other tyrant whose main effect was that of destruction, whose chief influence was one for corruption and degradation of human aspirations.

And, finally, neither benevolence nor malevolence at the base of societies has ever been anything close to 100% efficient.

Knight deals with the matter of efficiency in "Hell's Pavement", and also with the corruption of good intentions, the latter of which is most sound, historically. We know that many horrible eras developed without any such intent on the part of those who set them in motion.

Nor was any such horror anticipated by Dr. Kusko, when he devised the analogue, a process which

induced inhibitions in the victims, designed to prevent him or her from performing certain types of actions.

"'He's got an analogue', said Martyn. . . . He has auditory, visual and tactile hallucinations—a complete, integrated set. But, you see, these hallucinations are pro-social. They were put there deliberately. He's an accepted member of society because he has them.'

The dark man looked half-irritated, half amused. "He see things. What does he see, exactly, and what does it say to him?'

'Nobody knows except himself. A policeman, maybe, or his mother as she looked when he was a child. Someone whom he fears, and whose authority he acknowledges. The subconscious has its own mechanism for creating these false images; all we do is stimulate it —it does the rest. Usually, we think, it just warns him, and in most cases that's enough. A word from the right person at the right moment is enough to prevent ninety-nine out of a hundred crimes. But in extreme cases, the analogue can actually oppose the patient physically—as far as he's concerned, that is. The hallucination is complete . . .'

'Sort of a personal guardian angel, tailored to fit,' said the dark man."

Such was the original purpose of the analogue treatment—to prevent crime. Then politicians and all connected with government corruption or treason. Then—treatment against any attempt to overthrow the government.

Soon, a large percentage of the population had "angels", which did not cure or relieve any inner anxiety or desires or frustrations, which did not make the insane sane, but which merely prevented them from expressing their drives in any anti-social way. But analogue treatment was given only to those who had exhibited anti-social behaviour, or who requested them.

"The other grinned. 'Could I get one to keep me from drawing to inside straights?'

Martyn did not smile. 'That isn't quite as funny as it sounds. There's a very real possibility that you could, about ten years from now.'"

CHAPTER ONE of "Hell's Pavement" states the background situation; chapter two, 1990, gives the second stop, when the worlds' industrialists get together and agree upon an elaborate promotion plan. Each of them (each manufactures just about all kinds of consumer goods imaginable) will offer all of its products free for one year to anyone who

will sign a contract and undergo analogue treatment so that ever afterward he will buy only the products of the company with whom he has signed.

The rest of the book deals with the fantastic world that developed therefrom, where every human being alive had an "angel" which would not let him buy anything but the company's products—and the company was the ruler of his own section of the world. The angel also kept him from breaking any laws, or violating any taboos.

"'If a sin I would commit,
Angels stand twixt me and it...'"

And the whole world is insane, split up into little company-communities, each with bewilderingly different mores and customs, the inhabitants of each believing that only monsters dwell beyond the walls of their own milieu.

Where, you will ask if you have read thus far, is the conflict? This is a problem with the utopia story, for "Hell's Pavement" is a utopia in reverse, its people miserable but subconsciously impelled to believe they are happy and living in the best of possible worlds. The author is forced to use a more or less familiar device—the immunes, occasional individuals who did not receive an analogue and do not see "angels" when tempted to "sin". In this case, however, the existence of immunes is believable; analogues are induced mechanically, and while imperfect man has dreamed of perfect machines, he has never (and probably never will) build any which did not fail occasionally, even if but for a brief spell, and even if they had built-in repair functions.

This, then is the story of Arthur Bass, who wonders why he has no "angel", and at length discovers that he is not alone; in his flight and rebellion, and later communion with a most elaborate but totally believable underground, his odyssey gives the author a chance to show innumerable societies, each one curiouser than the last.

Without giving the story away, let me commend Knight for not contriving an easy solution to the problem or an artificially happy —or just as artificially tragic— ending. Since Arthur Bass is not a puppet who must gyrate against his own given nature in order to serve the author's purposes, he has his doubts about the Underground, too; and these doubts come to a head on the knotty problem of just what means can be justified by a "good" end—can a man be justifiably killed because *you* are driven by an idea, a vision of a fairer world to come, and will not brook petty opposition? Or any effective opposition.

Being someone less than Abraham Lincoln, I cannot with-hold malice from the publisher who saw fit to emblazon "A Macap Blonde and Her Reckless Lover Challenge a World of Rollicking Chaos" across the top of an otherwise imaginative and artistic cover. Moreover, I suspect that, in addition to occasional carelessness in leaving space between some of the breaks, some pruning was done with a cleaver, here and there. However, even if so, one cannot claim that this book has been bowdlerized; as Dwight MacDonald remarked about an allegedly bowdlerized edition of the "Good Soldier Schweik", the only way to tone down this book is to suppress it completely.

In summary: one of the most perceptive, fascinating, and delightfully horrible utopias I've ever read; not easy to read, but more than worth the effort. RWL

★

THE LAST WORD

THIS DEPARTMENT is for you, our readers, and is a vehicle for airing your opinions. We shall publish as many letters in each issue as space allows, and it makes no difference whether they are complimentary, or whether the editor is lambasted for what you think was an error of judgement in selecting stories. If you want to argue with an author, or with other letter-writers, here is an open forum for you.

While the editor may comment upon a given opinion, and may express one or two of his own at times, this is your department, and you have the last word. And whether your letter is published or not, rest assured that your opinions are read carefully and taken into consideration. All suggestions for improvement are welcome, and we will follow them wherever feasible.

ENDS AND MEANS

Dear Editor:

That was a very interesting story you had in your January issue, "Ripeness", by M. C. Pease, and he worked it all out very well, but it seems to me as if what we have here is only a fancy justification of the proposition that the end justifies the means. In the story, Reynolds collaborates with a totalitarian dictator because he is convinced that only a strong man in control can bring "order" and unite the world, and that otherwise civilization would have fallen in chaos.

Well, in the story that was what happened—but it isn't believable when you apply the principle to real life. I suppose that a certain number of those who supported Napoleon and Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin, etc., did so in a sincere belief that the evils of the regime they supported were after all only temporary and that once order was established, benefits would follow that would make up for the misery caused in setting up the system.

Has such a result ever followed in history? If it has, I've yet to come across it. Napoleon and subsequent dictators failed in their object, and so all the agony they demanded of their followers was in vain; to twist a phrase of Bonaparte's, eggs were broken, but there was no omelet. When Julius Caesar reached for the crown and fell before he could grasp it, the Roman Republic was hopelessly corrupt, true. No doubt many thoughtful men agreed that efficient government was worth the price demanded, and Augustus later did restore order. But the price wasn't paid just once; tyranny and misery that follow in a wake of struggles for power continued century in, century out, and honest, responsible administrators were harder to find as time went on. The corruption of republicanism, subject to some measure of control from the ruled —however slow that control expressed itself—was replaced by the corruption of absolutism

against which there was no control other than violent revolt.

And revolutions are usually led by fanatics who may spout about great ideals and good life, liberty, etc., but do not hesitate to deny liberty and life to anyone who does not fit their own definitions of "good". Not to overlook colleagues in a revolution who are there just for the pickings.

All in all, just about every time people have supported a dictator as the lesser evil the cost of "order" has been higher, longer in payment, etc., than the "chaos" which people supposed to be the greater evil. And the chaos eventually came after the strong man's reign and downfall, anyway.

Mr. Pease may shake his head and remind me that this case he writes of was really different—there was the super-computer which indicated the necessity. Sorry, I'm still not convinced; true, at the end of the story, a better world seems to have been established—but in such a case what guarantee is there that the computer really "knows" the best answer, or that humans would continue to be guided by it even if it did?

CARL ADAMS, Canaan, Conn.

We do not know what Mr. Pease's views on this matter may be, and hope that he will make his own comment. In any event, one reason for writing this type of story is to stimulate thought; and "Ripeness" certainly succeeded in your case.

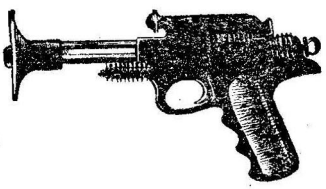
NEAT, BUT NOT READABLE ...

Dear Editor:

I have read three issues of your publication and I hope you won't mind if I make a small complaint because while it may seem small to you it is rather important to me. I like your magazine and want to read every issue, but that is just the trouble because I find it hard to read, the type is so small. The latest issue (May) is an improvement since I found that putting the type in two columns, while it might not look as nice as it did spread straight across the page like a book, did make it easier on my eyes but I still have trouble. Couldn't you use a larger type? Also this type you have is so fine and thin it blurs very easily.

About your stories I have no complaint at all, they are nearly all very fine and I enjoyed reading them. I read them all and when I find a story I do not care for (not many of these) I just let it go because everybody has their own opinions, and I'm sure that if I told you the stories I did not care for so much, why they would be just the stories someone else said were the ones they enjoyed most.

I am glad you do not publish some of the very erudite and technical articles like they have in some of the other science fiction magazines because I do not have a technical education, and these articles are nearly all way over my head. They make me feel like an awful dope because here I am reading about science, and I like to read about scientific subjects when I can follow them. Your stories do make one ponder now and then and this is very good, but an article which is full of mathematical symbols and diagrams and formulas makes me tired. I envy



people who can read them and make something out of them, and wish I had the time to study so that I could, too—but we all have to make a living, you know, and a lot of us who would really like to know more just don't have the time to study. So, please, if you want to assist in our educations, let the authors explain matters in the course of their very fine stories and leave the minute details and graphs and diagrams for the straight scientific magazines.

I. R. KIRSTEN, Cinn. Ohio

A number of readers complained about the size of our type; we must confess that we found it something of a disappointment, too. So although the type we are using now may not look as well, it should be much easier to read, which is the important thing.

OLDTIMER RETURNS

Dear Editor:

Picking up your March issue and thumbing through it, I noted a reference to Mr. A. Hyatt Verrill, and was sorry to hear that he had passed away—although it was astonishing to me to find that he was still going strong as they say, up to this year. I used to read *Amazing Stories* way back when, and remember an article they had about Mr. Verrill, back in the late '20s it must have been. He seemed to be quite a venerable old gentleman even then, from the photograph, so I guess he had a full and productive life.

It brought back a lot of fond memories of stories I had read and used to enjoy, so I bought this issue and I must say that scientifiction (as it was called back then) hasn't lost its appeal.

There seems to be a great deal more emphasis on the story than on the science today, but perhaps this isn't too bad. Still, I sort of miss the flavor of what I think of as the "good old days" but I guess reading tastes have changed a lot since then, and you have to keep up with the times if you are going to hold the attention of today's readers what with all the competition from television and radio and the movies.

I liked "Path of Darkness" by M. C. Pease best, that was most nearly like the kind of story that used to give me a real kick and start discussions with a friend here and there who didn't think that these magazines with their lurid covers were all trash. But I'll stick with you for awhile at least and see if I can sort of get acclimated to present-day scientifiction.

I wonder if you can tell me whether Mr. Verrill continued to write scientifiction after the old

Amazing Stories disappeared. I'd love to get my hands on his stories if I knew where they appeared and where the issues might be found. The last story of his I read was a two-part serial in one of the large-size issues.

ARTHUR PRICE, Bronx, N. Y.

To the best of our knowledge, Mr. Verrill's science fiction appeared only in the old Amazing Stories *and* Amazing Stories Quarterly. *The two-part serial you mention was probably "Treasure of the Golden God", which appeared in January and February* 1933. *He had two serials in later issues: "Through the Andes", September, October, and November* 1934, *and "The Inner World", June, July, August* 1935. *I'd suggest your contacting dealers who specialize in back issues of magazines for copies; they are rather expensive these days and are sometimes difficult to locate. Mr. Verrill did a number of articles on American Indians, which we published on various issues of our western magazines, but so far as we know he stopped writing science fiction a number of years ago.*

SHORT AND SWEET

Dear Editor:

Whoever Dennis Wiegand may be, I hope you will not lose track of him. "It Should Happen to a Dog" is one of the funniest stories I've read in a dog's age, and that illustration by Freas is a lulu! Have you (pant pant) any more by him? Woof!

GERALD HALL,

Kansas City, Kansas

We concur wholeheartedly. See "The Sedulous Apes" in the May issue of Science Fiction Quarterly. *Woof Woof!*

COVER COMPLAINT

Dear Editor:

I liked the cover on your May issue but was chagrined to find that there was no story inside to correspond with it. Why can't the cover illustrate a story in the magazine? You are not the only offender in this regard. How about it?

FRANK DURYEA, Albany, N. Y.

Covers have to be made up a long time in advance, while the editor waits until the last minute, in order to pick the best stories available to him for an issue. We tried assigning stories to fit covers for a while, but the readers seemed to feel that for the most part this did not have very happy results. While we did get a few unusually fine stories, where an author was really inspired by a scene, the general run was little more than competent.

BI-MONTHLY BOOSTER

Dear Editor:

Finished the January issue of *Science Fiction Stories*. Hurrah! for the new schedule of every two months, as I enjoy your magazine. It was too long between issues.

The stories in the January issue were excellent.

"The Gift of the Gods" was supreme. Very true—if the saucers turn out to be the real thing, will we conduct ourselves with common sense, or be swayed by the urge to grab whatever the saucer men have in store for us?

Anyway, keep up the good work. Happy blastoffs.

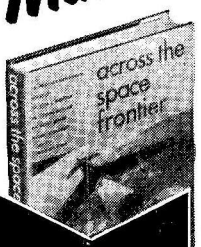
W. C. BRANDT, Oakland, Calif.

Unfortunately, the pessimistic viewpoint presented in Mr. Jones' story is all too well founded.

—Continued from other side

Man Will Fly to the Moon Soon!

Here Are the FACTS and Problems of Conquering Space



AT LAST! The world's top space research scientists reveal their plans for the conquest of space. You see their actual diagrams for a "round-the-moon" ship designed to travel in space only. You get a detailed preview of the first flight to the moon . . . blueprints for a 3-stage chemically propelled Rocket Ship . . . actual plans for a Giant Space Station to launch moon ships—1075 *miles above the earth!*

NOT science-fiction, but science-FACTS. "Across the Space Frontier" is the most comprehensive study of interplanetary travel ever published. Written by not one but SEVEN of the greatest living space experts including: Dr. Wernher Von Braun, Willy Ley, Dr. Heinz Haber, Dr. Joseph Kaplan.

ACROSS THE SPACE FRONTIER—Written by the SEVEN greatest living space experts. See description above. Pub. Ed. $3.95.

15 STORIES AND A NOVEL

ASSIGNMENT IN TOMORROW—A scalp-tingling volume about the life of the future—edited by Frederik Pohl. Absorbing, masterfully written stories that provide a chilling glimpse into tomorrow. Pub. Ed. $3.00.

585 PAGES — 23 STORIES

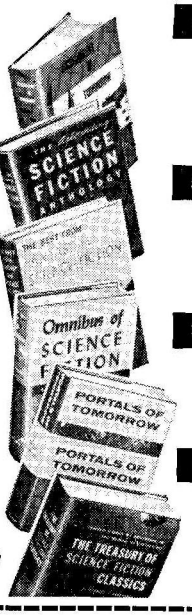
THE ASTOUNDING SCIENCE-FICTION ANTHOLOGY—Best tales from a dozen years of Astounding Science-Fiction Magazine selected by editor, John W. Campbell, Jr. Pub. Ed. $3.95.

Any 3

of These Complete New Masterpieces of

SCIENCE-FICTION

Yours for Only $1.00 with membership



3RD SERIES — 16 STORIES

THE BEST FROM FANTASY AND SCIENCE-FICTION
Selected stories from Fantasy and Science-Fiction Magazine. The woman who became her own daughter . . . atomic power from beans . . . etc. Pub. ed. $3.25.

562 PAGES — 43 STORIES

OMNIBUS OF SCIENCE-FICTION—Stories by outstanding authors of Wonders of Earth and Man . . . of startling inventions . . . of Outer Space . . . of Far Traveling, etc. Pub. Ed. $3.50.

371 PAGES — 16 STORIES

PORTALS OF TOMORROW
A sparkling crop of weird tales selected by August Derleth. The man who invented a solid vacuum, and many others. Pub. Ed. $3.75.

A WHOPPING 704 PAGES

THE TREASURY OF SCIENCE-FICTION CLASSICS
World-renowned stories by H. G. Wells, Jules Verne, Conan Doyle, Huxley, Philip Wylie, Poe, F. Scott Fitzgerald, J. B. Priestly, etc. Pub. Ed. $2.95.

SEND NO MONEY—*Just Mail Coupon*

Your choice of ANY 3 of the new Science-Fiction masterpieces described here, a $9.20 to $12.40 value—yours for only $1.00. Plus FREE Round-Trip Reservation to the Moon. (See Other Side.) Two books are your gift for joining, and one is your first Club selection. Every month, you will be offered the "cream" of the new $2.50 and $3 Science-Fiction books—for only $1. You take only those books you really want—as few as four a year. This offer may have to be withdrawn. So mail coupon RIGHT NOW to:

SCIENCE-FICTION BOOK CLUB
Dept. ASF-5, Garden City, N. Y.

SCIENCE-FICTION BOOK CLUB,
Dept. SFS-9, Garden City, N. Y.

Please rush the 3 books checked below, as my gift books and first selection. Bill me only $1 for all 3 (plus shipping charge), and enroll me as a member. Every month send free bulletin describing coming selection. For each book I accept, I will pay only $1 plus shipping. I need take only four books during each year I am a member and may resign at any time after accepting 4 selections.

GUARANTEE: If not delighted, I may return all books in 7 days, pay nothing and this membership will be cancelled.

- ☐ Across Space Frontier
- ☐ Assignment in Tomorrow
- ☐ Astounding Anthology
- ☐ Best from Fantasy and Science-Fiction
- ☐ Omnibus of Science-Fiction
- ☐ Portals of Tomorrow
- ☐ Treasury of Science Fiction Classics

Name_____
(PLEASE PRINT)

Address_____

City _____ Zone_____ State_____

Selections in Canada $1.10 plus shipping. Address Science Fiction Club, 105 Bond, Toronto. (Good only in U. S., A. and Canada.)

SIGN COUPON FOR BONAFIDE

FREE

Round Trip Reservations to the MOON!

Yes, It's True—An Opportunity to Have Your Name "On File" with the First Company Embarking on Commercial Flights to the Moon! And You Get a Certified Reservation to PROVE It!

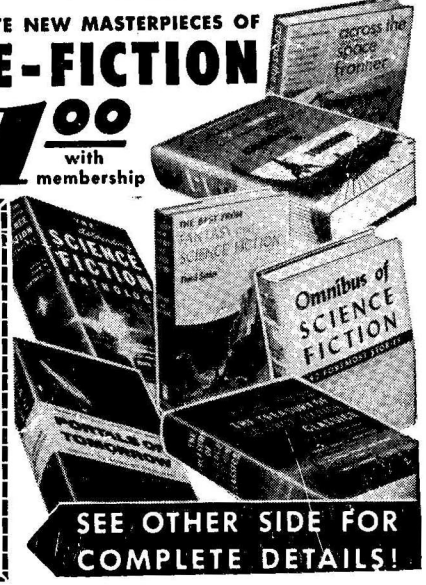
SIMPLY sign application below—and coupon on other side to become a member of The Science-Fiction Book Club... and receive your bona fide Moon-tour-Reservation—FREE! It will certify that you are among the first to apply for a reservation to the moon. *It will in no way commit you to make the voyage.* It simply means that your name is being held on file to be turned over to the first company making trips to the moon.

Your reservation will include fascinating facts to amaze your friends: your weight on the moon... a Rocket-Ship Schedule. Like your interest in Science-Fiction books, your wallet-size reservation will be evidence of your adventurous spirit... your imagination... your interest in the world of tomorrow. Simply choose ANY 3 of the exciting books shown here—for only $1. Fill out the coupon—and receive your Moon-Reservation Trip FREE!

PLUS

Any 3 OF THESE COMPLETE NEW MASTERPIECES OF SCIENCE-FICTION

Yours for only $1.00 with membership



ROUND-TRIP MOON-TOUR APPLICATION

Moon-Tour Reservations, Secretary
Science-Fiction Book Club

Please rush me my FREE Round-Trip-to-the-Moon Reservation.

My Reservation, which will be printed on a handy, wallet-size card, will include my actual Moon weight and a complete Rocket-Ship Flight for the Moon, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn. I will in no way be committed to make a voyage.

IMPORTANT: This Application Will NOT be Honored Unless Filled Out and Signed on the Reverse Side.

SEE OTHER SIDE OF COUPON FOR $9.20 TO $12.40 WORTH OF SCIENCE-FICTION BEST-SELLERS—for only $1.00!

SEE OTHER SIDE FOR COMPLETE DETAILS!