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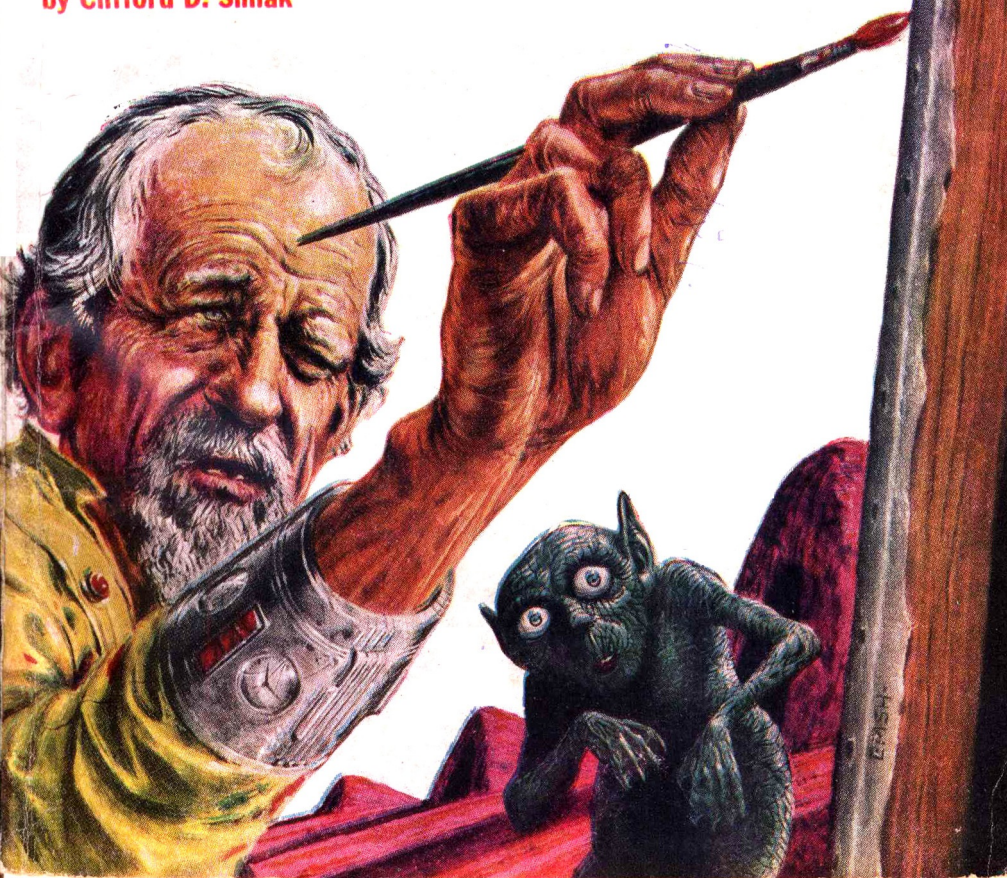
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**THE SPACEMAN'S**  
**VAN GOGH**

**by Clifford D. Simak**





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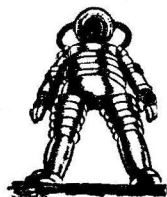
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## THE PEDAGOGICAL QUESTION

ONE OF the questions that come up every now and then, when science fiction is discussed—particularly when persons who do not read it, or who have read very little are concerned—is whether science fiction can teach science? And the next question is usually whether one of the standards of excellence, when a given example of science fiction is being judged, should be its instructive value.

Hugo Gernsback would have taken the affirmative on both questions. In his initial issue of *Science Wonder Stories* (June, 1929) he stated editorially, "...the stories are discussed by inventors, by scientists, and in the classroom. Teachers insist that pupils read them, because they widen the young man's horizon, as nothing else can." These statements were intended both in the reportorial and directive sense; that is, Mr. Gernsback was reporting events that had occurred in respect to some examples of science fiction that had been published in the past (some, no doubt

in his original *Amazing Stories*) and was stating his intention of publishing the type of story which would insure similar events thereafter.

That a given work of science fiction *can* contain scientific facts and expositions of which a particular reader may hitherto have been ignorant, or may not have understood as clearly before as after reading, goes without saying. However, there's one important hitch at the very start: in order to qualify as science fiction in the first place, a story must go *beyond* the facts as they are known or surmised at the time when it is written. In order to present a convincing story, the author must treat his speculations, for the most part, as if they were established fact, building his background, his action, and his motivations upon them.

NOW IF the author has worked out his scientific content in such a manner as to brief the reader on the known, here and now, be

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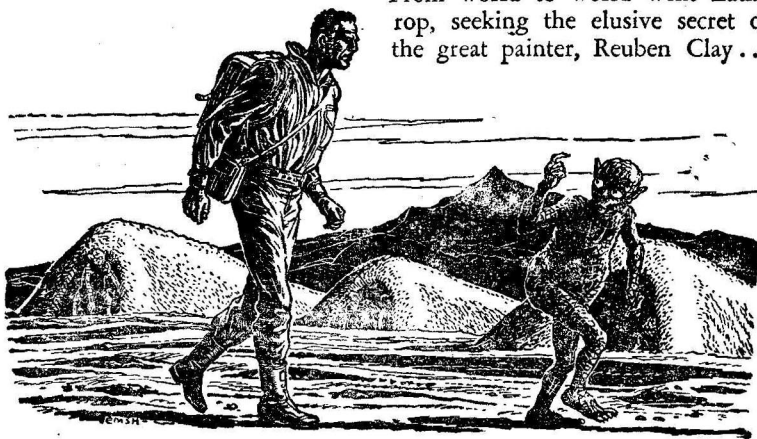
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From world to world went Lathrop, seeking the elusive secret of the great painter, Reuben Clay...



# THE SPACEMAN'S VAN GOGH

by **CLIFFORD D. SIMAK**

illustrated by **EMSH**

**T**HE PLANET was so unimportant and so far out toward the rim that it didn't have a name, but just a code and number as a key to its position. The village had a name, but one that was impossible for a human to pronounce correctly.

It cost a lot to get there. Well, not to get there, exact-

ly, for all one did was *pol*t there; but it cost a hunk of cash to have the co-ordinates set up for the *pol*ting. Because the planet was so far away, the computer had to do a top-notch job, correct to seven decimal points. Otherwise one took the chance of materializing a million miles off destination, in the depths



of space; or if you hit the planet, a thousand or so miles up; or worse yet, a couple hundred underneath the surface. Any one of which would be highly inconvenient, if not positively fatal.

There was no reason in the universe for anyone to go there—except Anson Lathrop. Lathrop had to go there because it was the place where Reuben Clay had died.

So he paid out a pocketful of cash to get himself indoctrinated to the planet's mores and speech, and a bucketful of cash to get his *polting* plotted—a two-way job, to get both there and back.

He arrived there just about midday, not at the village exactly, for even seven decimal points weren't good enough to land him squarely in it—but not more than twenty miles away, as it turned out, and no more than twelve feet off the ground.

He picked himself up and dusted himself off and was thankful for the knapsack that he wore, for he had landed on it and been cushioned from the fall.

**THE PLANET**, or what he could see of it, was a dismal place. It was a cloudy day and he had trouble making out, so colorless was the land, where the horizon ended and the sky began. The ground was flat, a great plain unre-

lieved by trees or ridge, and covered here and there by patches of low brush.

He had landed near a path and in this he considered himself lucky, for he remembered from his indoctrination that the planet had no roads and not too many paths.

He hoisted his knapsack firmly into place and started down the path. In a mile or so he came to a signpost, badly weather-beaten, and while he wasn't too sure of the symbols, it seemed to indicate he was headed in the wrong direction. So he turned back, hoping fervently he had read the sign correctly.

He arrived at the village just as dusk was setting in, after a lonely hike during which he met no one except a strange and rather ferocious animal which sat erect to watch him pass, whistling at him all the while as if it were astounded at him.

Nor did he see much more when he reached the village.

The village, as he had known it would, resembled nothing quite so much as one of the prairie dog towns which one could see in the western part of North America, back on his native Earth.

At the edge of the village he encountered plots of cultivated ground with strange crops growing in them; and working among some of these plots in the gathering dark-

ness were little gnome-like figures. When he stopped and called to them, they merely stared at him for a moment and then went back to work.

HE WALKED down the village's single street, which was little more than a well-travelled path, and tried to make some sense out of the entrances to the burrows, each of which was backed by a tumulus of the ground dug up in its excavation. Each mound looked almost exactly like every other mound and no burrow mouth seemed to have anything to distinguish it from any of the others.

Before some of the burrows tiny gnome-like figures played—children, he supposed—but at his approach they scuttled rapidly inside and did not reappear.

He travelled the entire length of the street; and standing there, he saw what he took to be a somewhat larger mound, some little distance off, surmounted by what appeared to be some sort of rude monument, a stubby spire that pointed upward like an accusing finger aimed toward the sky.

And that was a bit surprising, for there had been no mention in his indoctrination—of monuments or of religious structures. Although, he realized, his indoctrination would be necessarily skimpy

for a place like this; there was not a great deal known of the planet or its people.

Still, it might not be unreasonable to suppose that these gnomes might possess religion; here and there one still found patches of it. Sometimes it would be indigenous to the planet, and in other cases it would be survival transplantations from the planet Earth or from one of the other several systems where great religions once had flourished.

He turned around and went back down the street again and came to a halt in the middle of the village. No one came out to meet him, so he sat down in the middle of the path and waited. He took a lunch out of his knapsack, ate it, and drank water out of the vacuum bottle that he carried, and wondered why Reuben Clay had picked this dismal place in which to spend his final days.

NOT THAT it would be out of keeping with the man. It was a humble place and Clay had been a humble man, known as the "Space-man's Van Gogh" at one time. He had lived within himself rather than with the universe which surrounded him. He had not sought glory or acclaim, although he could have claimed them both—at times,

indeed, it appeared that he might be running from them. Throughout his entire life there had been the sense of a man who hid away. Of a man who ran from something, or a man who ran after something—a seeking, searching man who never quite caught up with the thing he sought for. Lathrop shook his head. It was hard to know which sort Clay had been—a hunted man or hunter. If hunted, what had it been he feared? And if a hunter, what could it be he sought?

Lathrop heard a light scuffling in the path and turned his head to see that one of the gnome-like creatures was approaching him. The gnome was old, he saw. Its fur was gray and grizzled and when it came closer he saw the other marks of age upon it—the rheumy eyes, the wrinkled skin, the cragged bushiness of its eyebrows, the cramped stiffness of its hands.

It stopped and spoke to him and he puzzled out the language.

"Good seeing to you, sir." Not "sir," of course, but the nearest translation one could make.

"Good hearing," Lathrop said ceremoniously.

"Good sleeping."

"Good eating," Lathrop said.

Finally they both ran out of "goods."

The gnome stood in the path and had another long look at him. Then: "You are like the other one."

"Clay," said Lathrop.

"Younger," said the gnome.

"Younger," Lathrop admitted. "Not much younger."

"Just right," said the gnome, meaning it to be a diplomatic compliment.

"Thank you."

"Not sick."

"Healthy," Lathrop said.

"Clay was sick. Clay....."

Not "died." More like "discontinued" or possibly "ended", but the meaning was clear.

"I know that. I came to talk about him."

"Lived with us," said the gnome. "He (die?) with us."

**H**OW LONG ago? How did you ask how long? There was, Lathrop realized with something of a shock, no gnome-words for duration or measurement of time. A past, present and future tense, of course, but no word for measurement of either time or space.

"You...." There was no word for *buried*. No word for *grave*.

"You planted him?" asked Lathrop.

He sensed the horror that his question raised. "We.... him."

Ate him? Lathrop wondered. Some of the ancient



tribes of Earth and on other planets, too, ate their dead, thereby conferring tender honors on them.

But it was not eat.

Burned? Scaffolded? Exposed?

No, it was none of those.

"We...him," the gnome insisted. "It was his wish. We loved him. We could do no less."

Lathrop bowed gratefully. "I am honored that you did."

That seemed to mollify the gnome.

"He was a harmless one," said the gnome. Not exactly "harmless." Kind, perhaps. Uncruel. With certain connotations of soft-wittedness. Which was natural, of course, for in his nonconformity through lack of understanding, any alien must appear slightly soft-witted to another people.

As if he might have known what Lathrop was thinking, the gnome said, "We did not understand him. He had what he called a *brushandpaints*. He made streaks with them."

Streaks?

.. *Brushandpaints*? Sure, brush and paints.

**S**TREAKS? of course. For the people of this planet were colorblind. To them Clay's painting would be streaks.

"He did that here?"

"Yes. It here."

"I wonder. Might I see it?"

"Certainly," said the gnome. "If you follow me."

They crossed the street and approached a burrow's mouth. Stooping, Lathrop followed down the tunnel. Ten or twelve feet down it became a room, a sort of earthen cave.

There was a light of a sort. Not too good a light, a soft, dim light that came from little heaps of glowing material piled in crude clay dishes placed about the burrow.

Foxfire, thought Lathrop. The phosphorescent light of rotting wood.

"There," said the gnome.

The painting leaned against one wall of the burrow, an alien square of color in this outlandish place. Under ordinary circumstances, the faint foxfire light would have been too feeble for one to see the painting, but the brush strokes on the canvas seemed to have a faint light of their own, so that the colors stood out like another world glimpsed through a window beyond the foxfire dimness. As Lathrop looked at the propped-up square, the glowing quality seemed to become more pronounced, until the picture was quite clear in all its unfinished detail—and it was not a glow, Lathrop thought; it was a *shiningness*.

**A**ND IT was Clay. The painting, unfinished as it

was, could not be mistaken. Even if one had not known that Clay had spent the last days of his life within this village, he still would have known that the work was Clay's. The clean outline was there, the authority of craftsmanship combined with the restrained quality, the masterly understatement, the careful detail and the keen sharp color. But there was something else as well—a certain happiness, a humble happiness that had no hint of triumph.

"He did not finish it," said Lathrop. "He did not have the... (there was no word for time). He (discontinued) before he finished it."

"His *brushandpaints* discontinued. He sat and looked at it."

So that was it. That was how it happened. Clay's paints had given out and there had been no place, no way—perhaps no time—in which he could have gotten more.

So Reuben Clay had sat in this burrow and looked at his last painting, knowing it was the last painting he would ever do, propped there against the wall, and had known the hopelessness of ever finishing the great canvas he had started. Although more than likely Clay had never thought of it as great. His paintings, for him, had never been more than an expression of himself.

To him they had been something that lay inside himself waiting to be transferred into some expression that the universe could see, a sort of artistic communication from Clay to all his fellow creatures.

"Rest yourself," said the gnome. "You are tired."

"Thanks," said Lathrop.

He sat down on the hard-packed floor, with his back against the wall, opposite the painting.

"You knew him," said the gnome.

Lathrop shook his head.

"But you came seeking him."

"I sought word of him."

**H**OW COULD one, he wondered, explain to the little gnome what he sought in Clay, or why he'd tracked him down when all the universe forgot? How could one explain to these people, who were color-blind and more than likely had no conception of what a painting was—how could one explain the greatness that was Clay's? The technique that lived within his hands, the clean, quick sense of color, the almost unworldly ability to see a certain thing exactly as it was.

To see the truth and to reproduce that truth—not as a single facet of the truth, but the entire truth in its right perspective and its precise

color, and with its meaning and its mood pinpointed so precisely that one need but look to know.

That may have been why I sought him, thought Lathrop. That may be why I've spent twenty Earth years and a barrel of money to learn all the facts of him. The monograph I some day will write on him is no more than a faint attempt to rationalize my search for facts—the logic that is needed to justify a thing. But it was the truth, thought Lathrop. That's the final answer of what I sought in Clay—the truth that lay in him and in his painting. Because I, too, at one time worked in truth.

"It is magic," said the gnome, staring at the painting.

"Of a sort," said Lathrop. And that probably had been why, at first, they had accepted Clay, in the expectation that some of his magic might rub off on them. But not entirely, perhaps; certainly not toward the end. For Clay was not the sort of simple, unassuming man these simple creatures would respect and love.

They'd let him live among them, more than likely finally as one of them, probably without the thought of payment for his living space and food. He may have worked a

little in the fields and he may have pattered up things, but he would have been essentially their guest, for no alien creature could fit himself economically into such a simple culture.

They had helped him through his final days and watched him in his dying and when he had finally died they'd done to him a certain act of high respect and honor.

**WHAT WAS** that word again? He could not remember it. The indoctrination had been inadequate; there were word gaps and blank spaces and blind spots and that was wholly understandable in a place like this.

He saw the gnome was waiting for him to explain the magic, to explain it better than Clay had been able to explain it. Or maybe Clay had not attempted to explain, for they might not have asked him.

The gnome waited and hoped and that was all, for he could not ask. You do not ask another race about the details of their magic.

"It is a ... (no word for representation, no word for picture) ... place that Clay saw. He tried to bring it back to life. He tried to tell you and I what he had seen. He tried to make us see it, too."

"Magic," said the gnome.

Lathrop gave up. It was im-



possible. To the gnome it was simple magic. So be it—simple magic.

It was a valley with a brook that gurgled somberly and with massive trees and a deep wash of light that was more than sunlight lay over all of it. There was no living creature in it and that was typical, for Clay was a landscape artist without the need of people or of other creatures.

A happy place, thought Lathrop, but a solemn happiness. A place to run and laugh, but not to run too swiftly nor to laugh too loudly, for there was a lordly reverence implicit in the composition.

"He saw many places," Lathrop told the gnome. "He put many places on a (no word for canvas or board or plane)...on a flat like that. Many different planets. He tried to catch the... (no word for spirit)...the way that each planet looked."

"Magic," said the gnome. "His was powerful magic."

**THE GNOME** moved to the far wall of the room and poked up a peat fire in a primitive stove fashioned out of mud. "You are hungry," said the gnome.

"I ate."

"You must eat with us. The others will be coming. It is too dark to work."

"I will eat with you," said Lathrop.

For he must break the bread with them. He must be one of them if he were to carry out his mission. Perhaps not one of them as Clay had been one of them, but at least accepted. No matter what horrendous and disgusting thing should comprise the menu, he must eat with them.

But it was more than likely that the food would not be too bad. Roots and vegetables, for they had gardens. Pickled insects, maybe, and perhaps some alcoholic concoction he'd have to be a little careful with.

But no matter what it was, he would have to eat with them and sleep with them and be as friendly and as thoughtful as Clay had been thoughtful and friendly.

For they'd have things to tell him, data that he'd given up all hope of getting, the story of the final days of Reuben Clay. Perhaps even some clue to the mystifying "lost years," the years when Clay had dropped completely out of sight.

**HE SAT** quietly, thinking of how the trail had come to an end, out near the edge of the galaxy, not too many light-years from this very place. For year on absorbing year he had followed Clay's trail from star to star, gather-

ing data on the man, talking with those who'd known him, tracking down one by one the paintings he had made. And then the trail had ended. Clay had left a certain planet and no one knew where he'd gone; for years Lathrop had searched for some hint to where he'd gone, and had been close to giving up when he finally had found evidence that Clay had come to this place to die. But the evidence had strongly indicated that he had not come here directly from where the trail had stopped, but had spent several years at some other place. So there was still a gap in the story that he followed—a gap of lost years, how many years there was no way of knowing.

Perhaps here, in this village, he might get a clue to where Clay had spent those years. But, he told himself, it could be no more than a clue. It could not be specific, for these little creatures had no concept of time or other-where.

More than likely the painting here in this burrow was in itself a clue. More than likely it was a painting of that unknown place Clay had visited before coming here to die. But if that were so, thought Lathrop, it was a slender hope, for one might spend three lifetimes—or more—combing planet after planet in the vain hope of recogniz-

ing the scene Clay had spread upon the canvas.

**H**E WATCHED the gnome busy at the stove, and there was no sound except the lonely whining of the wind in the chimney and at the tunnel's mouth. Lonely wind and empty moor and the little villages of heaped earth, here at the far edge of the galaxy, out in the rim of the mighty wheel of suns. How much do we know of it, he thought, this thing we call our galaxy, this blob of matter hurled out into the gulf of space by some mighty Fist? We do not know the beginning of it nor the end of it nor the reason for its being; we are blind creatures groping in the darkness for realities and the few realities we find we know as a blind man knows the things within his room, knowing them by the sense of touch alone. For in the larger sense we all are as blind as he—all of us together, all the creatures living in the galaxy. And presumptuous and precocious despite our stumbling blindness, for before we know the galaxy we must know ourselves.

We do not understand ourselves, have no idea of the purpose of us. We have tried devices to explain ourselves, materialistic devices and spiritualistic devices and the application of pure logic, which

was far from pure. And we have fooled ourselves, thought Lathrop. That is mostly what we've done. We have laughed at things we do not understand, substituting laughter for knowledge, using laughter as a shield against our ignorance, as a drug to still our sense of panic. Once we sought comfort in mysticism, fighting tooth and nail against the explanation of the mysticism, for only so long as it remained mysticism and unexplained could it comfort us. We once subscribed to faith and fought to keep the faith from becoming fact, because in our twisted thinking faith was stronger than the fact.

And are we any better now, he wondered, for having banished faith and mysticism, sending the old faiths and the old religions scurrying into hiding places against the snickers of a galaxy that believes in logic and pins its hope on nothing less than fact. A step, he thought—it is but a step, this advancement to the logic and the fact, this fetish for explaining. Some day, far distant, we may find another fact that will allow us to keep the logic and the fact, but will supply once again the comfort that we lost with faith.

**T**HE GNOME had started cooking and it had a good

smell to it. Almost an Earth smell. Maybe, after all, the eating would not be as bad as he had feared.

"You like Clay?" the gnome asked.

"Liked him. Sure, I liked him."

"No. No. You do like he? You make the streaks like he?"

Lathrop shook his head. "I do nothing now. I am (how did you say retired?).... My work is ended. Now I play (play, because there was no other word)."

"Play?"

"I work no more. I do now as I please. I learn of Clay's life and I (no word for write)... I tell his life in streaks. Not those kind of streaks. Not the kind of streaks he made. A different kind of streaks."

When he had sat down he'd put his knapsack beside him. Now he drew it to his lap and opened it. He took out the pad of paper and a pencil. "This kind of streaks," he said.

The gnome crossed the room to stand beside him.

Lathrop wrote on his pad: *I was a whitherer. I used facts and logic to learn whither are we going. I was a seeker after truth.*

"Those kind of streaks," he said. "I have made many streaks of Clay's life."

"Magic," said the gnome.



It was all down, thought Lathrop, all that he had learned of Clay. All but the missing years. All down in page after page of notes, waiting for the writing. Notes telling the strange story of a strange man who had wandered star to star, painting planet after planet, leaving his paintings strewn across the galaxy. A man who had wandered as if he might be seeking something other than new scenes to put upon his canvasses. As if his canvasses were no more than a passing whim, no more than a quaint and convenient device to earn the little money that he needed for food and polting plots, the money that enabled him to go on to system after system. Making no effort to retain any of his work, selling every bit of it or even, at times, simply walking off and leaving it behind.

**N**OT THAT his paintings weren't good. They were—startlingly good. They were given honored places in many galleries, or what passed as galleries, on many different planets.

Clay had stayed for long at no place. He had always hurried on. As if there were a purpose or a plot which drove him from star to star.

And the sum total of the wandering, of the driven purpose, had ended here in this

very burrow, no more than a hiding place against the wind and weather.

"Why?" asked the gnome. "Why make the streaks of Clay?"

"Why?" said Lathrop. "Why? I do not know!"

But the answer, not only of Clay's wandering, but of his following in Clay's tracks, might be within his grasp. Finally, after all the years of searching, he might find the answer here.

"Why do you streak?"

And how to answer that?

How had Clay answered? For they must have asked him, too. Not how, because you do not ask the how of magic. But why...that was permissible. Not the secret of the magic, but the purpose of it.

"So we may know," said Lathrop, groping for the words. "So all of us may know, you and I and all the others on other stars may know what kind of being (man?) Clay was."

"He was....(kind?). He was one of us. We loved him. That is all we need to know."

"All you may need," said Lathrop. "But not enough for others."

Although there probably would not be many who would read the monograph once he had written it. Only a pitiful few would take the

time to read it, or even care to read it.

**HE THOUGHT:** Now, finally, I know what I've known all along, but refused to admit I knew; that I'm not doing this for others, but for myself alone. And not for the sake of occupation, not for the sake of keeping busy in retirement, but for some deeper reason and for some greater need. For some factor or some sense, perhaps, that I missed before. For some need I do not even recognize. For some purpose that might astound me if I ever understood it.

The gnome went back to the stove and got on with the meal and Lathrop continued to sit with his back against the wall, realizing now the tiredness that was in him. He'd had a busy day. *Polting* was not difficult, actually seemed easy, but it took a lot out of a man. And, in addition to that, he'd walked twenty miles from his landing place to reach the village.

*Polting* might be easy, but it had not been easy to come by, for its development had been forced to wait upon the suspension of erroneous belief, had come only with the end of certain superstitions and the false screen of prejudice set up to shield Man against his lack of knowledge. For if a man did not

understand a thing, he called it a silly superstition and let it go at that. The human race could disregard a silly superstition and be quite easy in its mind, but it could not disregard a stubborn fact without a sense of guilt.

Shuffling footsteps came down the tunnel and four gnomes emerged into the burrow. They carried crude gardening tools and these they set against the wall, then stood silently in a row to stare at the man sitting on the floor.

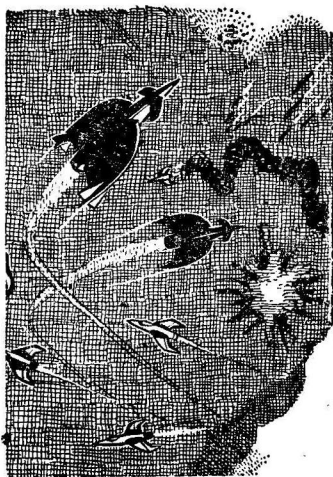
The old gnome said: "It is another one like Clay. He will stay with us."

**THEY MOVED** forward, the four of them, and stood in a semi-circle facing Lathrop. One of them asked the old gnome at the stove: "Will he stay here and die?" And another one said, "He is not close to dying, this one." There was anticipation in them.

"I will not die here," said Lathrop, uneasily.

"We will . . .," said one of them, repeating that word which told what they had done with Clay when he had died, and he said it almost as if it were a bribe to make the human want to stay and die.

"Perhaps he would not want us to," said another one. "Clay wanted us to do it. He may not feel like Clay."



There was horror in the burrow, a faint, flesh-creeping horror in the words they said and in the way they looked at him with anticipation.

The old gnome went to one corner of the burrow and came back with a bag. He set it down in front of Lathrop and tugged at the string which tied it, while all the others watched. And one could see that they watched with reverence and hope and that the opening of the bag was a great occasion—and that if there could be anything approaching solemnity in their squat bodies, they watched most solemnly.

The string finally came loose and the old gnome tilted the bag and grasped it by its bottom and emptied it upon

the earthen floor. There were brushes and many tubes of paint, all but a few squeezed dry and a battered wallet and something else that the old gnome picked up from the floor and handed to the Earthman.

Lathrop stretched out his hand and took it and held it and looked at it and suddenly he knew what they had done to Clay, knew without question that great and final honor.

Laughter gurgled in his throat—not laughter at the humor of it, for there was no humor, but laughter at the twisted values, at the cross-purposes of concepts, at wondering how, and knowing how the gnomes might have arrived at the conclusion which they reached in rendering to Clay the great and final honor.

**H** E COULD see it even now as it must have happened—how they worked for days carrying the earth to make the mound he'd seen beyond the village, knowing that the end was nearing for this alien friend of theirs; how they must have searched far for timber in this land of little bushes, and having found it, brought it in upon many bended backs, since they did not know the wheel; and how they fitted it together, fumblingly, perhaps,

with wooden pegs and laboriously bored-out holes, for they had no metal and they knew no carpentry.

And they did it all for the love that they bore Clay, and all their labor and their time had been as nothing in the glory of this thing they did so lovingly.

He looked at the crucifix and now it seemed that he understood what had seemed so strange of Clay—the eternal searching, the mad, feverish wandering from one star system to another, even in part, the superb artistry that spoke so clearly of a hidden, half-guessed truth behind the many truths he'd spoken with his brush.

For Clay had been a survival-member of that strange, gentle sect out of Earth's far antiquity; he had been one of those who, in this world of logic and of fact, had clung to the mysticism and the faith. Although for Clay, perhaps, the naked faith alone had not been enough, even as for him, Anson Lathrop, bare facts at times seemed not enough. And that he had never guessed this truth of Clay was easy to explain—one did not fling one's faith into the gigantic snicker of a Logic universe.

**F**OR BOTH of them, perhaps, neither fact nor faith could stand alone, but

each must have some leavening of the other.

Although that is wrong, Lathrop told himself. I do not need the faith. I worked for years with logic and with fact and that is all one needs. If there is other need, it lies in another as-yet-undiscovered factor; we need not go back to faith.

Strip the faith and the mumbo-jumbo from the fact and you have something you can use. As Man long ago had stripped the disbelief and laughter from the poltergeist and had come up with the principle of *polting*, the fact and principle that moved a man from star to star as easily as in the ancient days he might walk down the street to his favorite bar.

Yet there could be no doubt that for Clay it had not worked that way, that with fact alone he could not have painted as he did, that it took the simple faith and the inner glow of that simple faith to give him the warmth and the dedication to make his paintings what they were.

And it had been the faith that had sent him on his search throughout the galaxy.

Lathrop looked at the painting and saw the simplicity and the dignity, the tenderness and the happiness



and the sense of flooding light.

Exactly the kind of light, thought Lathrop, that had been so crudely drawn in the illustrations of those old books he had studied in his course on Earth's comparative religions. There had been, he remembered, one instructor who'd spent some time on the symbolism of the light.

**H**E DROPPED the crucifix and put out his hand and picked up some of the twisted tubes of oils.

The painting was unfinished, the gnome had said, because Clay had run out of paint, and there was truth in that, for the tubes were flattened and rolled up hard against the caps and one could see the imprint of the fingers that had applied the pressure to squeeze out the last drop of the precious oils.

*He fled across the galaxy, thought Lathrop, and I tracked him down.*

Even after he was dead went on and tracked him

down, sniffing along the cold trail he had left among the stars. And I tracked him because I loved him, not the man himself—for I did not know nor have any way to know what kind of man he was—but because I saw within his paintings something that all the critics missed. Something that called out to me. Deny it as I may, it may have been the ancient faith calling out to me. The faith that is missing now. The simple faith that long ago was killed by simple logic.

But he knew Clay now, Lathrop told himself. He knew him by the virtue of the tiny crucifix and by the symbol of the last great canvas and by the crude actuality of the mound that stood at the village end on this third rate planet.

And he knew why it had to be a third rate planet.

For there must be humility—even as in faith there had been humility, as there had never been in logic.

**L**ATHROP COULD shut his eyes and see it—the somber clouds and the vast dreariness of the wastelands, the moors that swept on to foreverness, and the white figure on the cross and the crowd that stood beneath it, staring up at it, marked for all time by a thing they did not understand, a thing they



could not understand, but a thing they had done out of utter kindness for one whose faith had touched them.

"Did he ever tell you," he asked the gnomes, "where he had been? Where he came from? Where he had been just before he came here."

They shook their heads at Lathrop. "He did not tell," they said.

Somewhere, thought Lathrop, where the trees grew like those trees in the painting. Where there was peace and dignity and tenderness—and the light.

Man had stripped the husk of superstition from the poltergeist and had found a kernel in the *polting* principle. Man had done the same with anti-gravity, and with telepathy, and many other things but he had not tried to strip the husks from faith to find the hidden kernel. For faith did not submit to investigation. Faith stood sufficient to itself and did not admit of fact.

What was faith and what the goal of faith? In the many tongues of ancient Earth, what had been the goal of those who subscribed to faith? Happy hunting ground, valhalla, heaven, the islands, of the blest—how much faith, how much could be fact? One would not know unless he lived by faith alone

and no being now, or very few, lived entirely by their faith.

**B**UT MIGHT there not be, in the last great reckoning of galactic life and knowledge, another principle which would prove greater than either faith or fact—a principle as yet unknown, but only to be gained by aeons of intellectual evolution. Had Clay stumbled on that principle, a man who sought far ahead of time, who ran away from evolutionary knowledge and who, by that very virtue, would have grasped no more than a dim impression of the principle-to-come.

Faith had failed because it had been blinded by the shining glory of itself. Could fact as well have failed by the hard glitter of its being?

But abandoning both faith and fact, armed with a greater tool of discernment, might a man not seek and find the eventual glory and the goal for which life had grasped, knowing and unknowing, from the first faint stir of consciousness upon the myriad solar systems?

Lathrop found the tube of white and unscrewed the cap and squeezed the tube and a bit of oil came out, a tiny drop of oil. He held the tube steady in one hand and picked up a brush. Carefully

he transferred the color to the brush.

He dropped the tube and walked across the burrow to the painting and squatted down and squinted at it in the feeble light, trying to make out the source of the flood of light.

Up in the left hand corner, just above the horizon, although he couldn't be entirely sure that he was right.

He extended the brush, then drew it back.

Yes, that must be it. A man would stand beneath the massive trees and face toward the light.

Careful now, he thought. Very, very careful. Just a faint suggestion, for it was

mere symbolism. Just a hint of color. One stroke perpendicular and a shorter one at right angle, closer to the top.

The brush was awkward in his hand.

It touched the canvas and he pulled it back again.

It was a silly thing, he thought. A silly thing and crazy. And, besides, he couldn't do it. He didn't know how to do it. Even at his lightest touch, it would be crude and wrong. It would be desecration.

He let the brush drop from his fingers and watched it roll along the floor.

*I tried*, he said to Clay.



## NEXT TIME AROUND

Given infinity, and an infinite number of planets and good-sized asteroids, etc., every man could have a world all to himself, if he so wanted. Isaac Asimov tells of a distant future when just about everyone *did* so want, and the means for satisfying that want are available. But there's an unsuspected joker in this solution to the problem of "Living Space". Ed Emsh has done the cover.

If a great artist — a world-renowned composer — were revived by a distant future, could he continue his work, and complete masterpieces unfinished, or merely thought of? James Blish treats this question in a new short story, "Art Work".

And we hope to have another parody by Randall Garrett, of course!

If death could be conquered, at the price of universal sterility, what would be your choice?

# THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

Novel

by MILTON LESSER

When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

—I *Corinthians*. XIII, 12

FOR A LONG time there was the warm, wet darkness. The birth of memory followed it, like a single sharp pang of hunger, summoning silent screaming. He lived in its throes, the one vivid memory, and was nurtured on it until the darkness was forgotten and there was nothing but the ground rushing up at him, the brief explosive sounds, the sharp stab of pain.

Until, presently, there came a distinction between the dark and the not-so-dark. The light.

There were vague shapes then, floating dreamily about him. When he saw them, his wonder grew—for the shapes were different from one another. At times he thought he understood these differences; but when the shapes

vanished, his recollection of them would blur. They would run together in his mind and he could not say if the shapes were varied or the same.

HE SLEPT often, but it was no return to the comforting darkness. While he slept he dreamed of the ingress of knowledge, and the knowledge was there, in him, but not the understanding. But now, yes, the shapes were different one from the other and the differences remained even when the shapes departed.

Then he saw color, which was not a mere blending of dark and light, but something else.

In the second memory he was a very small boy and someone with a voice higher-pitched than the other someone the very small boy knew.

George was on the floor...the back of his head crushed.

*Illustrated  
by Orban*



was scolding him. He did not know how to promise he would never do it again, whatever he had done, so he cried instead. It was also very vivid and he liked it better than the first memory.

The square shape, brown of color and always rolling toward him or away from him, he

associated with the food he ate.

The third memory was of a great crowd of people listening to him. He could not see the people but could sense their listening and watching from far away. He wished for comprehension more than for food when he was hungry. He

was an old man in the first memory and a small infant in the second and a middle-aged man in the third. It seemed strange, this being three different people.

**K**NOWLEDGE sang to him as he slept and he retained it as the memories joined others, blurring and growing. The knowledge had been abstract at first, like the difference between a round and a square shape, and colors, and close things which he could touch and far things which he could only see. First he learned that the far things were not a part of him and later he made a distinction between the close things which belonged to him and those which did not. Soon he could define the limits of himself, the head and the body and the arms and legs for groping movement. He became smaller but the world became larger.

Then the knowledge grew more refined and he thought he could utter not only sounds, but words. The knowledge came to him in words now, while he slept, but as he learned more about the world he realized he knew less about himself.

"Who am I?" he said, wishing he could open his eyes. But he was half asleep.

"He's inquisitive." The first voice was the voice of a woman, according to what he had learned.

"He always has been," said the other voice, the man. "But don't worry about it."

"Can he ever find out about himself?"

"Not from us."

"Maybe he hears you now. He just spoke. He can understand."

"He can learn. He can't understand yet."

He opened his eyes and smiled at them. They were wearing clothing and he was naked. He wondered if that meant he was different.

**I**T WAS a week later. The man, whose name was George (George Something, he had never mentioned his second name, but people had two names), said: "Sit down, son. How do you like it out here?"

George Something had finally allowed him to leave the room in which he had been born (made, healed?). His own room had been a bare cubicle with four walls, his couch, toilet and bathing facilities, and the sleep-thinker. This room thrilled him. There was a carpet on the floor, soft but pleasantly itchy against his bare feet. There was comfortable furniture



smoothing the brown hair back over his bald spot. "Probably congenital. It doesn't really matter."

SOMETIMES THEY spoke like this, about things he hadn't learned. It was as if he weren't in the room at all. At any rate, they were nice to him.

"What did you want to tell me?" George asked him.

"It's about our little game, George. I think I've finally figured it out. About me, I mean."

"Really?"

"Don't encourage him," the woman said.

He had no frame of reference, but he thought the woman was pretty. He preferred looking at her to looking at George, but sometimes he found her staring at him and that made him realize George wore clothing and he did not. He would have to ask them about clothing, since they both wore it and all his memories were of people with clothing.

"A child wants to know those things," George told the woman. "He's just like a child."

"Some child," said the woman.

He was much bigger than she was and taller than George, too, but not so heavy.

and a breathtaking expanse of window, through which you could see hills rolling off to purple haze in one direction and plunging, steep and wooded, to the blue waters of a lake in the other.

"It's much nicer than my own room," he said.

"Well, you can consider this place your home, and all the land down to the fence on the other side of the lake."

"That's a lot of room," he said. "I can't even see the fence from here."

George smiled paternally. "It's probably more room than you'll ever need. We just want you to enjoy yourself."

He was squinting out the window, shading his eyes against the bright glare of sun on the lake. "Wait, I think I can see it. The fence. Tell me, what's on the other side?"

"He's still inquisitive," the woman said. "Try to block that out of his personality."

George shook his head,

"There are two possibilities," he said without complete conviction. "Either I was in an accident and had amnesia—I remember some kind of accident—"

"George," the woman scolded.

"What do you want me to do? Some memories are retained, in spite of everything. Memory is by no means chronological, that's all. You ought to know how it works. This is your third time, isn't it?"

"Only my second," the woman corrected.

"THAT'S good enough. Vivid experiences are most firmly fixed. Then youthful experiences and recurrent ones. They're the last to survive brain damage or mental shock or even old age. Amnesia, also. You know how hard it is to remember day-to-day experiences when you're old. Brain neurons simply can't accommodate all the new connections."

"I guess all that means I have amnesia," he said, sounding disappointed. "That's too bad. I guess I liked the second possibility better."

"What's that?" George asked.

"Well, I thought maybe I was a robot or some kind of artificial man."

"A robot," the woman said, as if the idea amused her.

George stood up, walking to the window and staring off at the purple haze. "Now that you've made your guesses," he said, "does it really matter?"

"I don't know. I call you George and the woman has a name, Sally. I don't even have a name."

"I'm sorry," George said contritely. "It's Gilbert."

"Am I your son or something, assuming I'm no robot?"

"Sonny boy," Sally said.

"Will you shut up?" George demanded. "Are you looking for trouble?"

"I didn't mean it. But we have to spend three more months like this. I'll go crazy."

"If you took your eyes off him for a minute, maybe I'd believe you."

"Maybe that's what I mean. How did I know he'd be such a good-looking kid?"

A NERVE throbbed in George's temple. "Just cool off, that's all. Three months isn't forever. The next team takes over then."

"I think you ought to give him some clothing, anyway."

Gilbert nodded. "I was thinking the same thing," he



informed them. "I mean, you both wear clothing."

"One more step," said George. "Every step, he's growing. Why don't you keep your big mouth shut? There's sophistication in clothing. I thought the idea was to keep him naive."

"I won't be responsible," Sally said. "I'm human."

"Then take some pills. Don't bother me about it."

"My loving husband."

"This is more important, and you know it."

"You're always talking about me as if I'm a *thing*, not a person," Gilbert said. "That's why I thought I was a robot."

"He's learning fast, George."

"Don't have to point the fact out to him. And no more talking like this is front of him. Gilbert, we'll let you wear shorts. Ordinarily, robots don't wear clothing, but you're a very special robot and there's a woman in the house."

"Then I am a robot?"

"You said so. A robot. A servant. Remember that, Gilbert. You do as you're told."

"Certainly. So I'm a robot."

"Yes, just as you suspected."

"Now that you mention it, I don't feel like a robot"

FOR MANY days after that, he examined himself with his new awareness. He tried to do it with critical objectivity, but the frame of reference proved inadequate, as when he thought Sally was pretty but couldn't be sure. What, actually, distinguished a very special robot from a man? Wheels, gears, cogs and feedback units instead of skin, blood, viscera, nerves and the rest? In that case, he was a man. Once his nose had bled for no apparent reason and he had treasured the red-brown stains on a piece of soft cloth, then hid it, then destroyed it in the incinerator. When he went down the steep hill to the lake in the early morning and swam there, while George and Sally still slept somewhere in the great house, he was pleasantly cold and had to run long and hard, dripping wet, until he grew colder and suddenly warmer.

He ate the same food George and Sally ate and was gripped by hunger if he skipped two meals in a row. And he had seen Sally sunning herself on the terrace when George went away sometimes; he thought first that she looked unlike him, undressed, and second that she secretly wanted him to see her that way. The first thought proved nothing: she was a woman. The second

thought indicated she considered him a man, not a robot, and in some obscure way wanted his approval.

AND THERE were these memories. They had stirred his consciousness in the dim beginning, when shapes were vague and undistinguishable. George and Sally, had spoken about them too, as if it were proper and fitting he had them but they wished it could be otherwise.

He had hoped he was a robot because it had seemed romantic, but now that he was told he was, he wished it were not so. Was that the sophistication they had mentioned?

The fence immediately behind the house to the north and a mile and a half or so beyond the house, bordering the far end of the lake, intrigued him. It was at least twice his height and made of smooth, opaque metal. It enclosed a circular area of three square miles including the house and the lake, but he did not know whether it were meant to keep something out or keep something in. Perhaps it was a prison.

For me? Gilbert thought.

Tentative conclusion: he was not a robot, but a man. For some reason, they had lied to him.

## II

“GILBERT,” Sally called. “Gilbert, come here I’m out on the terrace.” Her voice sounded strangely thick, as if she had difficulty pronouncing the words.

Earlier in the day, George had gone of somewhere. Gilbert was biding his time until he discovered how George got through the high fence, but it wasn’t terribly important. When the time came he could scale it with the help of a platform of rocks.

“Gilbert!”

“I’m coming.” He was a robot, a servant. But they had never asked him to do menial tasks. In fact, the whole concept of artificial men to serve seemed foolish in light of the mechanical gadgets which cooked food, disposed of garbage, cleaned house and did just about everything else.

There was Sally, on the terrace as he had seen her from the window sometimes. She was stretched out comfortably on a lounge which would roll into the house at a touch of her hand. On a table near her were some ice spheres in a tray and a bottle of amber liquid. She had a glass in her hand and was drinking from it, then balancing it on the robe which was draped across her from waist

to knees, then drinking again. She was sweating in the strong sun.

"George won't be back till tonight," she said.

"That's too bad," he answered. Did she want sympathy, or what?

"Come out here, Gilbert. Come on."

They had spoken about it once, she and George. She'd said she was human, she'd go crazy, referring to the way Gilbert had not been clothed. Now she was that way, and staring at him peculiarly. He stood in the doorway, undecided, and stared back at her. Something stirred and awakened within him, not something new which had never been there before, but something deeply hidden. It was like drawing a whole new stratum of behavior from a reservoir which was as yet virtually untapped.

**S**HE WAS nice to look at; more than nice. Suddenly, he could see it—if he were an artist, if he could draw pictures like those on the walls inside the house, he would recognize the distinction even more clearly. To draw a man, you needed lines and angles and changing of direction and deep shadow and obstructions. To draw a woman, you needed but one sweeping, curving line to capture all the

grace, all the fluid, poetic simplicity, and the potential, captured rhythm.

He stepped out on the terrace slowly. She patted the lounge and he sat down next to her. He wanted to run his hand along that one sweeping, rhythmic line. It was not quite passion, he told himself; it was inquisitiveness. He wondered if that were the basic emotion.

"Sex rears its ugly head," said Sally thickly. "I don't suppose you want a drink."

"I don't know."

"Here, try some of mine."

He did, and it was bitter. He put the glass down.

"Don't tell George. Mustn't tell George."

"What."

"That I offered you liquor to drink. Too sophisticated."

"Oh, All right."

"Don't tell George anything."

"About what?"

**H**E REALIZED she was talking to herself now.

"My God. Running around in that abbreviated loincloth. What does George think I am? Keep Gilbert naive. Well, I'm not naive. If he thinks I'm going to take pills, he's crazy. There's Gilbert. You're beautiful, Gilbert. Positively beautiful. Did you know that?"

"Thank you." She was beau-

tiful too. But he was more curious than anything.

"Aren't you even going to kiss me? No, I guess you don't know—"

"I know," he said. It was another memory. He puckered his lips, leaned forward and smacked them wetly against her forehead.

She giggled. "That's just beautiful."

"Thank you," he said again. The kiss had not affected him, but her closeness did. He was breathing hard. He wondered why she had giggled like that. "Am I really a robot?" he demanded abruptly.

"What do you think?"

"George said I was a robot."

"And?"

"I hope I'm not."

"Tell me why, Gilbert."

She was drinking again.

"I don't really know. It's hard to say. I just hope not."

"Is it because of me?" She sat up, her body weaving strangely as if she found the task difficult.

"A lot of things, Sally." He had never addressed them by their names before, but had always spoken of them in the third person. He thought she would take offense, but instead she smiled and placed her damp hands on his bare shoulders.

"Let them play their game of politics if they want.

George didn't tell me anything about politics when we got married. It isn't fair."

IT WAS then that George appeared in the doorway.

"Get your dirty hands off him," he said in a low voice, his mouth hardly opening to form the words. His face had drained white.

Sally swallowed what was left of her drink in one gulp. "I thought you weren't coming back till—"

"I'm early. Just what the hell do you think you're doing Go to your room Gilbert."

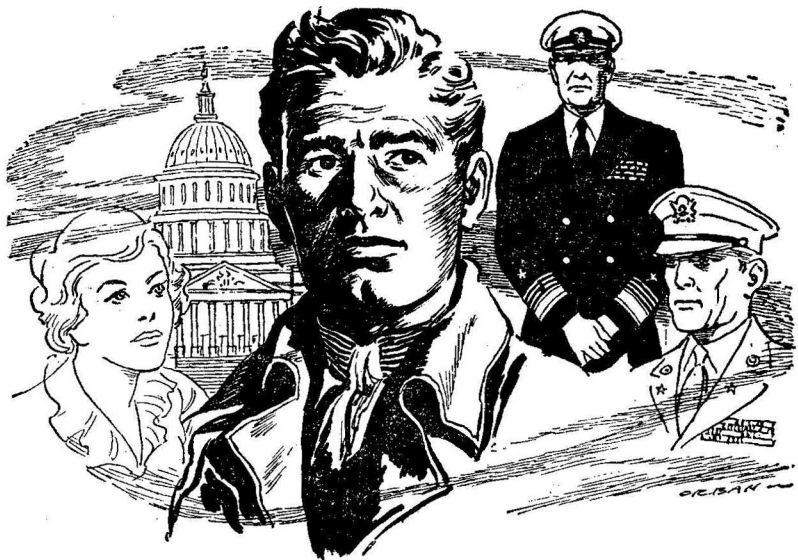
Gilbert backed off awkwardly, but stood there watching them. He realized what anger was without recalling any previous example of it. George's fury was directed more at Sally than at him, though.

"My own husband sees me in the arms of another man and...aren't you a man? All right, you're angry. You don't have to be angry like that. You and your damn cause. You ought to want to kill someone or break things because—well, I was almost unfaithful. I would have been, I would have. What are you going to do about it, lover boy?"

"Shut up," George told her.

"I've shut up long enough."

"Then go back to the city.



I'll meet you there when it's time for the next team to take over."

**T**HERE was Gilbert's unpredictable memory again. He knew of the city and could almost—but not quite—envision it with tall buildings and so many people the streets were black with them, like the people who listened from unseen places while he spoke. Only he was a middle-aged man, then. Their house was pleasant and the hills and lake, but now it swept up and engulfed him, this half-knowledge of a vaster world outside and he knew he would not be happy until he at least

saw it. "I think I'd like to go with you," he said.

They hadn't heard him. "I've got some news, lover," Sally was saying. "If I go back to the city I'm going to get a divorce."

"You can't."

"Can't I? It's a free world."

"Be reasonable. You're upset. You know why you can't."

"I do not. You're dedicated, I'm not."

"You've been drinking."

"That doesn't matter."

"In front of Gilbert."

"Damn you and Gilbert both."

"Gilbert, I told you to get out of here."

YES, HE had been ordered; but if he were not a robot he did not have to obey. "I'd rather listen if you don't mind," he said.

George shook his fist at Sally. "Now see what you've done."

"I haven't done anything. That's the way he is."

"I ought to kill you. Just to get a cheap thrill, you have to ruin everything."

"You'll never understand, will you? It's not important to me; I just don't care, really."

"I ought to kill you. Get out of here and let me think."

She stood up unsteadily and swayed toward Gilbert, clutching at him for support.

"I said keep your hands off him."

Sally snickered but sucked in her breath sharply and began to sob after George had slapped her, leaving the imprint of his hand clearly on her cheek. "You shouldn't have done that," she said.

"I did it. You'll never get a divorce, understand? We could never trust you out of our sight; we'd have to kill you."

"That's the third time you threatened me."

"No. I'm just telling you for your own good. Think about it."

"I will."

After Sally had gone, George gave Gilbert a lecture about how she was sick and couldn't be held responsible for her actions. If she had disturbed Gilbert in any way he was to let George know immediately. No, he hadn't been disturbed. Yes, he understood Sally was sick and that explained everything; he kept nodding his head, not believing a word of it.

He felt sorry for Sally but didn't particularly like her. He suddenly found he did not like either one of them, and was curious to know why.

LATER that afternoon, rain clouds rolled over the compound from the west, piling high into thunderheads. It was the first electric storm Gilbert had witnessed and he anticipated fright without feeling it. He had long since abandoned the bare cubicle in which he had first become aware of his existence, and now watched the jagged streaks of lightning under the dark sky from the window of his small bedroom.

But he began to tremble when the storm evoked his first memory. He was hurtling down at the ground again and the lightning outside became a blinding, tearing crash. He shut his eyes and covered them with his

hands, but the memory remained. After a time he stopped fighting it altogether. Instead, he tried to exorcise it by summoning the details in greater clarity. He was in some type of aircraft—a helicopter, he thought—and something had gone wrong. What goes wrong in an aircraft, a helicopter, he wondered? It hardly mattered. That detail was not significant. Almost certainly, he had died in the crash.

No, not died. He was here.

But he had a memory of someone who had died. Not himself? A memory which had found its way from the dying man's brain to his own? He never experienced the memory as an observer. He was in the aircraft, he was streaking earthward, he lived again the awful final moment of the crash and oblivion. He—and yet not. That man had died.

**H**E STUDIED the details of his nightmare memory, dispelling fear. Up to a certain point, they were clear, but he never could see the interior of the aircraft clearly, nor the features of the ground spinning and rising to meet him. The way the man must have felt that last instant before death was most vivid,

was part of himself, was the key which had somehow opened the door to his existence, beckoning him up from the warm, dark slumber which preceded his life.

He did not go down to the diningroom for dinner that night and half-expected George or Sally to come for him. The house was large, the rooms, sound-proofed. He heard nothing and guessed they were still angry with one another and were grateful for his absence. Well, it was not his affair. If Sally had sought one type of behavior from him and George opposed it, the problem was not his. He longed to dictate his own behavior, though, and resolved to leave the compound at his first opportunity.

The electric storm had passed away to the east now, but he still could hear its muted thunder faintly through the wind and drumming rain. His stomach grumbled with hunger but he decided he would rather not eat than see George and Sally tonight. He slept.

**H**E WAS not sure what he had first awakened him but now as he lay awake in his bed he heard his name being called. Sally's voice, muted by the soundproofing, but shouting and audible. If he did not go to them now,



they might come to him. They had never disturbed his bed-chamber before; it was the one private place he had, except when he ventured down to the lake early in the morning. He rose from his bed and went outside into the hall and downstairs.

Sally no longer called his name. He almost decided to go back to sleep but went to investigate a faint light coming from the living room instead.

The door was partially ajar. A blue night lamp glowed behind it, casting Gilbert's long shadow out into the hall. He pushed the door open and stepped into the room.

"Sally?" he whispered.

No answer.

Something was huddled on the floor near the window-wall. The wall of glass was opened partially. Rain poured in.

A chair had been overturned, a table lay on end. The blue nightlamp had been thrown to the floor, where its reflector cast the dim light in one empty corner of the room. Gilbert crossed to the window-wall to shut out the rain and examine what was on the floor.

He never reached the window-wall. George was on the floor, sprawled awkwardly, one arm over his face as if averting a blow.

The blow had landed.

THE BACK of George's head was crushed and sticky-red. Gilbert kneeled and picked up something which George's body partially hid. It was a heavy metal statuette. At once, he was sorry he had touched it. Sally had called him but now Sally was gone. Had she wanted him to find George like that? Had she guessed he would find the statuette and touch it?

He thrust his hand inside George's shirt against the damp skin of his chest. It was not cold but seemed cooler than it should be.

The exploration had been completely instinctive on Gilbert's part. Now he pressed the same hand against his own chest and felt the heart beating its steady rhythm. He tried George again. Nothing.

Sally had killed him.

The word for that, Gilbert knew, was murder. There were crimes worse than murder. The knowledge came to him, unbidden. It was something he knew, without knowing how he knew. Grand larceny was worse, and criminal assault without intent to kill, and maiming. Maiming was worst of all. The knowledge was incomplete, as if he had part of the picture but not all of it. This taking of a

life should have been the ultimate evil, but was not.

Gilbert frowned. George was dead. George had ceased to exist, except as a still, lifeless corpse on the floor. Could you do anything worse than that, worse than killing a man? The answer, definitely, was yes. You could do a lot of things. You could damage important property, scar someone, take money, cripple someone without killing.

Had Sally meant to cripple George but struck too hard and so killed him instead?

### III

THAT WAS one question, but not the important one. The important one, the one which stirred Gilbert uneasily and told him his knowledge was incomplete, went like this: why should murder be so trivial? Or, more important subjectively, what made him know it was comparatively trivial without knowing why? If George and Sally had taught him everything he knew in the early, pre-living time, while he slept the warm sleep, then they had omitted that fact.

Intentionally?

Perhaps not. Perhaps all his knowledge was incomplete. His thoughts spun dizzily. George would know who had

killed him. Sally wanted it to look as if Gilbert had done it, and probably had succeeded, but George would know. George? That was ridiculous; George was dead, wasn't he? Dead men didn't get up to point accusing fingers at their murderers.

Rain poured in through the window-wall, wetting George and the rug, drenching Gilbert. If he closed the window and returned to his room and slept, perhaps in the morning he would find both George and Sally waiting for him at the breakfast table. They might still be fighting, he thought. Then was the excitement he had felt when he was alone with Sally on the terrace a more significant emotion than curiosity? Sally had experienced it, too, and it was that excitement which had angered George and led to their fight and George lying on the floor now. It might depend on the individual or on the circumstances or both, Gilbert decided. But no matter how long he slept, that wouldn't alter the fact that Sally had struck George down with the statuette, had called Gilbert's name and fled.

HE STOOD up and left the livingroom, searching the house for her. It did not surprise him when he found the house empty. No Sally. Only

the rain outside and George's body in the living room.

He suddenly did not want to see George that way again. He found their bedroom, the one that George and Sally shared. He slid a closet door open and took out some of George's clothing, dressing in it. When he looked in the mirror on the closet door he discovered the fit to be a poor one. The trousers were not long enough, nor the sleeves of the shirt. The shoulders and waist, though, were too large, too baggy. But he liked the feel of the garments, nevertheless.

He found a cold leg of fowl in the kitchen, wolfed it down and drank a bottle of milk. Then he went outside into the rain, forcing his way through the wet undergrowth below the raised terrace. He was soon carrying large rocks which formed a decorative fence for the rear garden of the house to the edge of the metal wall of the compound. He piled them there and had rigged a rough staircase almost his own height after an hour's work.

**HE CLIMBED** it swiftly, felt the rocks slide a little, then hold. The wall blocked the wind and most of the rain, but he wanted to climb over it quickly and feel them buffeting him again.

His fingers clawed at the top of the wall and held. Slowly he lifted himself until he could curl one leg over the top and then raise his body. He sat on the wall, finally, staring out into blackness.

Once he turned and looked behind him, where the blue light shone through the window-wall of the living room. George was in there, dead. And all of Gilbert's life was there, too, safe but circumscribed. He had sought the answer to the riddle of his own existence there but had not been able to find it.

Thunder rolled distantly, barely audible. He had not seen the lightning. He pushed off from the wall with his hands and tumbled to the wet earth outside the compound.

He had walked far; much further than the distance from the house to the wall on the other side of the compound. Hours ago, the rain had ceased. He was drenched and hungry, but happy. Now he could see the great trees all around him in the first light of dawn. All night long he had been climbing up and down hills, but up ahead the last of the rises seemed to end cut off in air, and he could see nothing beyond it.

When he reached the crest, he was confronted by a steep, almost perpendicular drop of about thirty feet. He thought

he could manage it if he had to. When he saw what lay at the foot of the cliff, he knew he had to.

**I**T WAS a highway, broad and perfectly flat, flanked by a high bluff on either side and disappearing, in a perfectly straight line which suggested great distance, to the rose-tinted eastern sky. Vehicles streaked along the highway in either direction, hardly more than flashes of shape and color.

Gilbert began his descent of the steep slope with care, half sliding, half falling to the first clump of shrubbery which offered a handhold. After that, it was mostly falling, but—bruised and shaken—he managed to reach the bottom. He shook himself off, dusting away the dirt and brambles, on an apron of bare earth which bordered the highway. He watched the vehicles race by with angry rushing sounds and felt the backlash of air as they passed.

He wondered if one would stop for him and began waving his hands furiously. The road was without the faintest suggestion of a curve. They could see him a long way off, but that did not mean they would stop.

The sun came up red and warm and had soon dried his clothing. He was on the point

of rejecting the possibility that someone might stop when one of the vehicles slowed almost as soon as it came into view and shuddered to a stop several hundred yards beyond him. With a cry, he ran toward it.

**A** DOOR slid open in the mirror-bright metal surface, revealing a plushly upholstered interior and a plump, jolly-looking man sitting inside.

"Going to the city?" he said, smiling at Gilbert.

"I guess so. What city is it?"

The man looked at him and stopped smiling, but Gilbert was inside and the door slid shut and they were soon under way. It was smooth, it was almost like floating and it ate up distance.

"Drink?" the man said.

He pressed his hand against the dashboard and a section of it opened up, revealing a small bar with several bottles and several glasses perched in small holes which fit their bottoms. "All right," said Gilbert, pouring from a bottle which seemed to contain only water. It did and he was thirsty. He drank.

"Just water, huh? Teetotaler?"

"Well—"

"Don't mind me. Been driving all night. Probably be-

fore your breakfast. I'll have some Scotch if you don't mind."

Yesterday, Gilbert had seen what too much drinking had done to Sally, how it had made her almost incapable of standing. He wondered if the plump man could control his vehicle under the influence of Scotch, but poured the drink and gave it to him.

"Obliged, young fellow." The drink was downed. "Say, don't I know you from someplace?"

"I don't think so." Gilbert did not want to say it was impossible, because then the man might ask questions he could not answer.

"I don't usually forget a face. Well, half hour yet before we reach Washington: it'll come to me. Don't mind if I rush a bit, do you son? Say, you were kidding then, weren't you? What city?"

"You see—" began Gilbert.

"Very funny. Capital of the world, what city?"

"You can rush if you want. But I'm in no hurry."

"**I GOT TO**, son. Had an accident in Chicago last week. They had to rush my embryo in by jet. Took a week before I could get rolling again, so I'm late."

"I'm sorry to hear that. Were you hurt bad?"

"Bad?" The plump man

guffawed. "Bad, he says. Son, I must have set some kind of record. Fifty seven fractures and head damn near decapitated. Least that's what they tell me. I didn't want to look at the body: those things always kind of get me. The wife says I got to stop drinking so much when I drive. Traveling salesmen shouldn't, she says.

It's expensive, anyway, them fetching your embryo half way across the country and growing it when you're still supposed to have twenty years left in the old body. It's okay if they charge more the younger you are, I guess; but they ought to take your job into consideration. Try driving three hundred miles an hour six days a week some time. You can be careful as you want, I don't care. It'll still catch up with you. Where you coming from, son?"

"Out in the country," Gilbert said vaguely.

"You one of those chlorella farmers? You must be. There's a coincidence for you. What I sell, I mean. Chlorella beefsteaks. Try to tell me they taste like the real thing and I'll make you eat a gallon of that mush. Unless you've been changed recently, looks to me you might be fresh out of school. Chlorella engineer huh? I guess it solves the food problem, but I wouldn't

taste it and I sell the stuff for a living."

GILBERT WANTED to say he didn't understand a thing the man was telling him. But then he would have to say where he came from and what he did and did not know. He held his silence.

"I envy you," the man went on. "Look at me; forty-five year old body, but brand new. That's the wife for you. I couldn't be any younger without her. Wouldn't be right. Too expensive to change her, too, she says. Instead she spends all her money on clothing, just like a woman. I can't walk up a flight of stairs without panting. I ought to kill her. Well, maybe I will. Of course, you haven't heard anything. Why it's still a crime, I don't know."

"Of course," said Gilbert. George had threatened to kill Sally, and while it had annoyed her, she had not seemed unduly alarmed. She had regarded the idea more as a nuisance than anything else. What sort of crazy world was this, where dying hardly mattered? No, the world wasn't crazy. It was Gilbert who lacked knowledge. Again he had the feeling that mentally he was incomplete. Something had been kept from him.

"...a good way for the government to pick up mon-

ey," the plump man was saying. "But let me tell you this: next election I'm voting for a new Administration. Let everybody pay income tax again, I don't care. A man has a right to change when he wants to. Say, I hope you don't work for the Administration."

"No," Gilbert said.

"YOU SURE do look familiar. Spend much time in Chicago or New York?"

"I come from around here."

"Well, I don't know; I'll get it, though. When a face sticks like that, all you got to do is keep concentrating on it. Right on the tip of my tongue now, son."

"Are there any robots?" Gilbert asked abruptly.

"Robots? You mean in Washington? All sorts of servo-mechanisms, if that's what you mean. I don't get you."

"I mean, well, robots which look like men? You know."

The plump man surveyed Gilbert strangely from the corner of his eye. "Are you pulling my leg? You been reading too much of that fantastic literature all the kids like. Say, are you all right?"

"I was just wondering." There were no such things as man-like robots. He was no robot, then. He smiled when he realized the plump man

probably was sorry he had stopped to pick him up.

"Turn around, will you? Haven't seen anything but the profile. Maybe I'll know if I see your whole face." The man craned his neck and stared sideways at Gilbert. The highway was straight, but the vehicle began to veer off toward the apron and the bluff beyond it.

**"HEY, WATCH out!"** Gilbert cried, leaning over quickly, grabbing the wheel and setting them straight again.

"What's the matter? Afraid of a little pain? It's unpleasant, but a little pain never hurt anyone, my priest says."

"We almost crashed."

"Just keep your shirt on. I'll get us there."

"I'm sorry."

"Hmph." And the plump man lapsed into silence.

Moments later, they reached the suburbs of the city, the tall, solid rows of apartment buildings which replaced the bluffs and flanked them on either side as the vehicle swallowed mile after mile of sameness.

"Sixty million people in Greater Washington these days" the man finally said. "No wonder you chlorella engineers are in such demand. Got to keep them fed."

Something flashed sudden-

ly into view on the highway. A man's figure, darting across.

"Look out," Gilbert warned.

The vehicle decelerated, throwing him forward. He struck his head against the dashboard, blinked his eyes, felt a slight bump as if the vehicle struck something soft. They came to a stop, reversed their direction and soon stopped again.

"Why didn't he look where he was going?" the plump man said angrily.

**HE CLIMBED** out of the vehicle, Gilbert joining him. A crowd had gathered, and someone had draped a blanket across the figure in the middle of the road.

"Damn carelessness," the plump man said. "Couldn't he see me coming?"

A young woman yelled, "Look who's talking. You can't come roaring through the suburbs at three hundred miles an hour."

"I was in a hurry," the plump man stormed. "Ask my friend here."

"That's true," Gilbert admitted. "Is he—dead?"

"What kind of dumb question is that?" the young woman asked Gilbert. "Of course my husband is dead. He was so young it will cost us a small fortune."

"I'll pay half of it," the



plump man told her, "though I don't know why."

"Half? I'll bring it to court if I have to. Every penny."

"That's robbery. I could have had my own wife changed for less."

"I don't care about your wife. We have witnesses who say you were speeding. We had an important business engagement this afternoon, too."

"Well..." the plump man considered.

"Don't you well me It's all or a court action."

"I'm always doing some thing like this," the plump man told Gilbert in a low voice. "Gets the wife all upset." Then, louder: "O.K., lady. Here's my name and address." He gave her a card. "I'll mail you a check."

"That's better."

**T**HE PLUMP man nodded, then abruptly kneeled by the blanket and lifted a corner. He looked under it, flushed and stood up. "What a cheap trick," he said. "The old confidence game and you almost suckered me."

"I don't know what you mean," the woman said.

"Like hell you don't. Your husband isn't young. He's old; he's at least sixty. It doesn't cost much to change at that age, but it costs some-

thing. You must have just changed yourself and he wanted to avoid paying for his change. So he..."

"You can't prove it."

"I don't have to. Just try and collect, that's all."

They were shouting at each other now, and Gilbert felt uneasy, being a part of this without understanding what was happening. He slipped away into the crowd and soon had left the plump man and the young woman and her dead old husband behind him.

On all sides now were the multi-storey apartment dwellings which, Gilbert suspected, would only admit direct sunlight to the streets in the middle of the day. People stared at him the way the plump man had, as if they recognized him or thought they did. At first he thought something might have been wrong with his appearance, but the clothing he had taken from George's wardrobe seemed to match that of the other men he saw. It was something else.

He found out what when he reached the next intersection. An elderly man was leaving a doorway marked UNITED WORLD POST OFFICE and almost bumped into him.

"Excuse me," Gilbert said.

"My fault," the man muttered.

He stared at Gilbert. He

gulped and swallowed. "Mr. President," he said.

## IV

"**Y**OU'RE ATTRACTING a crowd," Gilbert told the elderly man, who had grasped his elbow firmly in both hands and was holding on for dear life while Gilbert tried to pull away.

"Stop fidgeting, young fellow, sir. They said there might be something wrong with you. It's you, all right. I just saw your picture, how you was as a youngster, inside. Police! Hey, police!"

The crowd hemmed them in on all sides now and was muttering in excitement. After a time, a man in uniform pushed his way through and said, "All right, what's the trouble? If this man is bothering..." But he saw Gilbert's face and his voice trailed off lamely, then rose almost as shrill as a whistle. "I'll be changed; it's him."

He dispersed the crowd and ignored the questions tumbling from Gilbert's lips. He led Gilbert to a sleek vehicle waiting at the curb. Another uniformed man inside started the vehicle and as they rolled away and gathered speed Gilbert sat huddled back in a corner and said, "I haven't done anything. I wish you

would tell me what's going on."

"Don't you know who you are?"

"Well—no, I don't. Is it important?"

"Is it important, he says! I'm sorry, sir. They've just been looking for you all over the world, that's all. Here you were, right in Washington. You're the President of the United World." The policeman smiled. "Is that important enough?"

"**N**OW, TAKE it easy, Bob. Carley will be here soon."

"Take it easy," Gilbert aped his solicitous tone. "That's all I've been hearing. You all say I'm the President, but it means nothing to me. I don't remember anything further back than a couple of weeks ago. I'm young; I don't look twenty-five. If you all would stop bowing and scraping and start explaining things, maybe this would make sense. "And," he added petulantly, "my name is not Bob, it's Gilbert. No, I guess it's Bob. They said Gilbert, though."

"It's both. Robert Gilbert. But that makes sense: they called you Gilbert in case there's any memory of it in your mind. Who were they, Bob? Could you identify them?"

"Was I in an accident?"

"Was I kidnapped? And who are you?"

"DelCove, the White House Secretary. I'm not going to answer anything, Bob. We're old friends and I hate to do this to you. I guess you can wait a little longer, though. Whatever Carley says will be all right with me."

"Who's Carley?"

"Rear Admiral Carley, your personal physician. You really don't remember anything, do you? Well, we'll get to the bottom of this. How it happened, I mean. Heads have been rolling over at the Embryo Lab, by the way."

"I STILL don't know what you're talking about." At the police station, men in plainclothes had called for him and sped him away to the White House, where delCove had met him. There had been a hopeful look on delCove's face, as if something along the way might trigger Gilbert's memory. But all was bedlam—the handclasps, the back-thumping, the nervous, respectful stares, the concern. He felt fine. He just did not remember—provided there was something to remember. George and Sally had said he was a robot. These people claimed he was the President. Essentially, it was the same thing; they would have to

show him. Perhaps the doctor, Carley, would understand.

"Incidentally," delCove asked, "what shall I do about the reporters?"

"How should I know? I'm sorry."

"No, it's my fault. I keep forgetting. I guess I'd better have them sent away." He spoke briefly on a phone, then informed Gilbert: "The gate staff says Carley just got here. So, we'll just wait. Want something to eat or drink?"

Gilbert shook his head. "I only want to find out."

**M**OMENTS LATER, a tall slender man with short-cropped, bristly silver-gray hair entered the room. His motions were sparse and efficient, as crisp as the naval uniform he wore. "Sit down, Bob. Off with the shirt."

The examination was quick but thorough. Carley merely grunted as he completed each test, making notations on a pad. He finally attached what looked like a pair of electrodes to Gilbert's temples with some greasy stuff he applied by hand. Gilbert felt nothing, but there was a small drum-shaped thing in a case which had been brought in. The drum rotated slowly as a stylus traced an erratic line across it. Carley switched the drum off at last, unfastened

the electrodes and withdrew a card from his pocket, comparing it with the drum.

He sighed and said, "He's the President, Al."

DelCove's sigh was louder. "I wasn't going to suggest that you make sure, but it's a relief. I guess you know your business."

Carley digested the compliment with a shrug. "What don't you remember, Bob?" he demanded.

"Everything, that's all." Gilbert grinned ruefully. "Who I am, what I'm supposed to be doing, how I got into that compound, how I can have memories of an old man when I'm only a kid, why people go around running over other people and hardly batting an eyelash, all sorts of things."

"He doesn't know anything about changing," delCove informed the Admiral. "They've kept that from his mind."

"Apparently. I wonder what else."

"**WHY DON'T** we send for Janet? They say if a man has amnesia, sometimes the person closest to him—"

"Uh-uh. Wouldn't work. This isn't amnesia. It's not a block. It's a lack."

"Then what can we do?"

"We can try to teach him." Carley smiled at delCove.

"The education of a President, eh?"

"Why don't you just answer my questions?" Gilbert demanded. They had treated him with a certain amount of deference, but he sensed they were now regarding him more as a sick man than an important one. He wondered if he could check the trend and turn it back on itself. "Who is Janet?"

"Your wife," delCove said.

"Then bring her here."

DelCove nodded and reached for the phone, but Carley caught his hand and held it. "Don't," he said; "we'll do it if you insist, Bob. But consider this. If you were married to someone for forty years and then worried yourself sick for a few weeks because he was missing, how would you like to find him and discover he didn't know you at all." It was a long speech for Carley.

"I wouldn't like it."

"That's the position Janet would be in, don't you see?"

"We'll, if you say so. What *should* we do?"

"You'll have to learn what they kept from you. Tell me this: do you know anything about the world situation?"

**GILBERT** CONSIDERED the question and drew a virtual blank. He sensed he had only a schoolboy's knowl-

edge, a smattering of geography and politics, of economics and sociology, enough to satisfy him had he ever raised the question to himself but not enough to make him an authority or even well-informed. "Hardly anything," he said.

DelCove brightened. "It seems to me another change would—"

"Don't you think you ought to take care of the reporters personally, Al?" the Admiral abruptly asked him. "They won't be satisfied with anything short of the Secretary. Eh?"

"Well, I suppose you're right. What do you want me to tell them?"

"Me?" Carley asked. "I'm only authorized to issue medical information. You may say the President is in good health, but suffering from a memory block."

"I thought you said it was a lack, not a block."

"Not sure," Carley grunted. "Block is simpler. You tell them that. Tell them he's in good hands. Resting comfortably. You know. The Security Council will be summoned, of course. You can tell them that, too. Will it satisfy them?"

For answer, delCove headed for the door. "I'm on my

way down now," he called over his shoulder.

"What about my wife?" Gilbert asked after he had gone.

"I think world security comes first. We'll tell her you're all right; she can see you in time."

"Forty years. You said I was married forty years. I'm not even forty years old. At least I don't look it."

"We'll get to all those questions," said Carley. "You're overwrought now, Bob. Take this." He prepared a needle, rolled up Gilbert's sleeve, administered it expertly. "You'll rest. By then, the Council will be here and you can have one of your favorite breakfast confabs. Eh?"

The soporific worked rapidly. Moments before, Gilbert had almost been able to feel his nerve-ends jangling, but now a gently insistent lethargy suffused him and he only dimly was aware of Admiral Carley calling the various ministers of his Cabinet and military commanders.

**T**HE NEXT morning, Gilbert learned that he was going to have to keep his appetite in check if he were going to conduct his affairs of state in the manner they seemed to expect of him. He met with his civilian advisers

first, and it went smoothly enough. They were an advisory body, not a policy-making one but Gilbert told them they would go right on making policy until he had managed to fill the vacuum inside his skull. He tapped the side of his head meaningfully and felt not at all uncomfortable or embarrassed about it; but their responding smiles, he thought, were uneasy. Afterwards, Admiral Carley told him the various department heads were just waiting for such an opportunity to assert themselves in behalf of special interest groups and he had better assert *himself* more forcefully in the future.

Well, it was something he had to learn.

**T**HE BREAKFAST had been delicious—buckwheat cakes and bacon, coffee and Danish pastry, a good cigar. But Gilbert groaned when identical dishes were set before him as the military chiefs filed in.

"Good morning sir," Carley greeted a stocky, balding man with a craggy face and a circlet of five stars on each shoulder. "General Roderick, the President will have to be re-appraised of the entire military situation, as I told you by phone. A memory block."

Gilbert found himself shaking hands with General Rod-

erick, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with Admiral Wilson, the bookish, bespectacled Naval Chief, General Jahru, the dark Indian Army Chief and General LeBlanc, a beefy, red-faced man who looked more English than French, but was the Air Force Chief from Aachen.

"This is a time of crisis," General Roderick said, his booming, authoritative voice stilling the sound of silver on dishes. "A confused President is just what the enemy ordered."

"Let me assure you, in that case," Gilbert said, "that I won't meddle harmfully, until I know what's going on. Incidentally, who is the enemy?"

Roderick looked at Carley, who shrugged and told him, "These things take time, General. If you're thinking the same thing I am thinking—"

"You mean that perhaps the enemy was responsible for this in the first place?"

"Certainly. Someone stole the embryo and developed it—outside. They're the ones who stand to gain, naturally."

Gilbert nodded. "It seems to me that ought to be our first problem, gentlemen. I could lead you back to the compound where they kept me. If we found out who they were and why—"

"Not us," said Roderick.

"The Bureau of Investigation, sir."

CARLEY agreed. "I've already informed them. While you were sleeping, Mr. President, I took the hypnosis. I believe agents have found that compound by now."

"I see." Yesterday it had been Bob, even to the White House Secretary. He preferred it that way but couldn't insist. Probably the formality was important. Mr. President. He should have swelled with pride, but it only confused him. "What about that enemy?" he asked.

"Well, sir," this was Admiral Wilson, the Navy Chief, "what would you do if the Chief of State of an enemy force fell into your hands?"

Before Gilbert could answer, Carley pointed out to his superior officer, "You'll have to readjust your thinking, sir. Take into consideration the fact that the President has a memory block and knows nothing of the change."

"That's even better," Wilson said. "To continue. Here is this man who opposes everything you stand for, and who can throw a monkey-wrench into all your plans. You have him and no one knows it. He's missing but he

can't be found. And this is the important thing: you can't kill him."

"Why not?"

"We'll get to that," said Carley.

WILSON continued, "The moment you kill him, he'll live again, no longer in your power, but where he belongs. That much is automatic. But you managed to spirit him away. What would you do?"

"Well, I can't say, I understand what you're talking about. This business of living again, I mean."

"It's simple," Carley said. "They didn't want you to know about it; they had to keep you in ignorance. Certain lower forms of life can regenerate destroyed tissue, whole limbs, parts of their body. Even human beings have the power to a certain extent, for scar tissue heals wounds. It was known as early as the middle of the last century that the original cells of a young animal or human embryo are undifferentiated, unspecialized. That is, any part of the animal's body, any organ, could be formed from any part of the embryo. Each cell of the embryo, has latent in its genes and chromosomes—yes, even in the cytoplasm itself—all the characteristics of the individual. His skin,



his eyes, the color of his hair, the size of his brain, the congenital defects if any, all are contained in every embryonic cell. You understand?"

"That's simple biology," said Gilbert. "Of course I understand."

"Very well, sir. This is the part they've blocked from your mind. We are able to recreate nature's work in the laboratory; we do it all the time. When a man reaches sixty-five—or if he's been in a fatal accident or has a fatal illness before then—he can be duplicated. Duplicated. We save scar tissue taken from him at some time during life—scar tissue which, like the germplasm, contains all the traits of a new individual. But while the germplasm contains traits for thousands of different individuals and in the case of sperm will fertilize an egg with unpredictable results, the scar tissue contains traits which can produce only a carbon copy of the original individual. There is an Embryo Bank in every large city, and an Embryo Lab. Every man, woman and child on earth is hence given a kind of immortality."

## V

**I**T WAS a concept Gilbert could not grasp at once. "You mean," he gasped, "I—I died?"

"You were in an accident. Copter crash. You were sixty-three years old. Your scar tissue, the potential embryo of the new Robert Gilbert, was stolen from the Embryo Bank. You—"

"Then why couldn't they just destroy the tissue and have done with it?"

"Because," said Admiral Wilson, "there is an additional supply of it in the case of important individuals, maintained elsewhere. They were aware of that."

"They were also aware of a law which acted in their favor," Carley continued. "As long as a man is alive, or in this case, a re-born man, another embryo cannot be activated. I don't have to tell you why; there can only be one Robert Gilbert, or one Admiral Carley, or anyone else."

"You mean it's a physical law, a natural law?"

"Not at all. A law of the state, but necessary. If there were two identical individuals one could commit a crime and the other receive the punishment. One would have to be responsible for the other's actions. It's a protective law and a necessary one, although we were fishing around for special dispensation in your case. Confidentially, I think the Supreme Court would have had to say

no. Anyway, it doesn't matter."

"SO HERE you have this individual," said Admiral Wilson. "The Chief of State, your enemy. His brain waves are on record. They tell us that he exists, not *where* he exists. That is, they tell his people, your enemy. If he dies, they'll know it. You can't kill him. But he's an important figurehead, a rallying point for your enemy. What do you do?"

"I—I keep him prisoner, I guess."

"Exactly. And if you can maintain his ignorance, he'll never question his identity. Suppose he has an important decision to make, one upon which hangs your fate. You feel quite certain his decision will be detrimental to you. What then?"

"I'd keep him prisoner, at all costs; I'd probably try to fly him out of the country, though."

"That might not be easy. What better place to hide him, than right under our noses?"

"Now that you mention it, they were speaking of—yes—of guarding me in shifts. You mean they would have gone right on doing that, the rest of my life?"

"In all probability," Wilson said. "Other men could make

the decision in place of you, naturally. But you're best informed. You have all the information, and while others could learn it, you've won the hearts of your people. Since the decision entails some unpleasantness, that was an important consideration. And the enemy knew it."

"You haven't told me who the enemy is."

"THAT'S THE hard part," said General Roderick. "We don't know what they've done to your mind. We can't predict what your reaction will be at this point."

"Who are they?"

"In India," Jahru spoke for the first time, "the problem has always been more crucial than elsewhere."

"Over-population?" guessed Gilbert.

"Over-population, Mr. President. People no longer die. They are re-born. But normal births continue, although at a decreased rate. There are close to six billion people on earth, Mr. President. Rebirth has finally become universal, which means that if each married couple only averages two children, the figure will be doubled in a generation since no one dies."

"All is not hopeless," the Frenchman, LeBlanc, said. "We are replacing most farm crops with chlorella, a cheap,

fast-growing algae that yields some thirty tons per acre per year. Even so, you know the old story. You place one grain of sand on the first square of a checker board, two on the second, four on the third, eight on the fourth and so on—by the time you have doubled all the squares, there are not that many grains of sand on earth to fill the final one."

Gilbert smiled wanly. "Did you say all wasn't hopeless?"

**C**ARLEY SPREAD his hands out. "It's not as bad as it appears."

"It's worse," Gilbert said. "Two days ago I was alone in a compound with two people who might have been my parents—although they looked too young—or who might have created me if I were a robot, or who might have... well, anyway, there just wasn't any rest of the world that mattered. Finding out who I was seemed the most important thing in the world. Solve that and I'd solve everything. Now I know; now it's worse."

"You're confused," Carley told him. "You're upset. You're still all mixed up. All this must almost be a nightmare to you, I realize. Yet you were ready to make your decision before the accident. Congress gave you special powers in the emergency. We

were ready to back up your decision, with force if necessary, but we couldn't make it in your absence because the people would listen to you, but revolt against us."

"You haven't answered my first question. *Who is the enemy?*"

**W**HITE - UNIFORMED houseboys came and cleared the dishes from the table. Cigars were lighted. Wilson got a pipe going. Carley chain-smoked cigarets, as he had been doing all the while the others ate.

"I said everything isn't hopeless," Le Blanc pointed out. "This is one situation even the French cannot shrug off. The alternatives are simple and clear cut: either rebirth must be outlawed or natural childbirth must cease. You studied the problem for—what was it?—seven years, Mr. President."

"I don't remember."

"We can do something about that in time," said Carley.

"Meanwhile," LeBlanc continued, "the decision must be made. Since you have already reached it, it now must be executed."

"I thought you said it was already made. That I made it."

"You did," Roderick assured him. "You did not have time to announce it."

"You were going to fly to India," Jahru said, "and make your announcement from there, dramatically. My people can understand these over-population problems better than any others. With a hard core of support from them—"

"But there was this accident," Carley said; "you died."

"I died." Gilbert wondered if they could appreciate his predicament. It was all very well for them to speak blithely of rebirth and its consequences. They had lived with it, were familiar with it, had probably been born and reborn themselves. It had been stricken from his memory. Objectively, it was still fantastic to him. Subjectively, it was frightening. *I died in an accident. I am now living again.* "Look," he said, "why was it you couldn't produce another me in secret and let him announce the decision if it were so important?"

CARLEY ANSWERED him. "Physically, it would have been possible. The embryos mature in a matter of weeks, not months or years. By 'mature', I mean to any specified adult age, of course. There are drugs, concentrated derivatives of colchicine which, used in conjunction with certain pituitary extract,

can speed maturity almost beyond belief. But we couldn't. For the decision would have been hard enough for them to swallow. The people, that is. If your enemy then produced you and we had two President Gilbert's on our hand—"

"We could not have been held responsible," General Roderick finished for him. "Revolution, very probably."

"What did I decide?" Gilbert wanted to know.

"Consider the alternatives," Jahru told him. "No more rebirth or no more children."

"If I considered them now, divorced of all other consideration, I'd decide in favor of the children. You see, this rebirth seems—well—unnatural to me."

"They blocked it," said Carley.

"Perhaps more," Wilson added. "They might have induced that sort of reaction in you, Mr. President. Like post-hypnotic suggestion. You will find the thought of rebirth distasteful."

"You can be re-oriented," Carley said.

"I don't want to be re-anything. I just want to understand! Excuse me. I didn't mean to shout."

"Understanding will come," said Jahru. "There is no permanent damage they could have done to your mind."

"**YOU DECIDED,**" Le-Blanc told Gilbert, "that the rebirths are predictable, valuable because knowledge does not have to be learned from the cradle up but can be snowballed with each successive birth, economically sound because a stable population will result. You decided that natural childbirth was a necessity of the animal kingdom but that man had finally risen the one full step higher, divorcing himself from his natural heritage, evolving to a face new problems with a new level which forces him to ing, original solutions."

"You decided on sterilization," said Carley.

"It took guts," Roderick boomed. "I tell you, Mr. President, I was opposed. 'He'll never get away with it', I said. 'He's right; I agree with him, but the people could never be made to understand. Yes, they'll live forever. But they'll be childless.'"

"Then," Wilson went on, "you surprised old Roddy and the rest of us. You said the most valuable minds must be reborn as adults so nothing will be lost in the pursuit of knowledge. You suggested a certain fraction of—well, lesser lights and Lord knows there are plenty of them—could be reborn as children. In the long run, that would make everyone happy, you

said. They'd have 'children' if they wanted children, but humanity would take that next logical step. It was ingenious."

"It took guts," Roderick said again. "Genius, nothing. Guts."

"No one has told me anything about the so-called enemy yet," Gilbert declared. "Gentlemen, I want to understand all this. I want to cooperate; I want to do the right thing. I feel I'm not being told everything. I want time to think, but I need all the facts."

"I'm sorry," Roderick said. "The problem's clear to us. So we assume—"

"Certain strong factions are opposed to your decision," Wilson broke in. "Actually, they probably amount to a large part of the population. Can't satisfy them, I suppose. Here they have immortality—"

"Of course," Carley interrupted him, "they'll understand in time. A step like this must be taken swiftly, decisively."

**WILSON GLARED** at him, as if he, a four star admiral, did not like the idea of being interrupted by an officer of lower rank. Gilbert almost missed the by-play, then was surprised to see Carley stare his superior officer

down. Wilson finally grunted, then exhaled a screen of pipe smoke and glowered behind it.

"We'll back you up, Mr. President," Roderick said. "Have no fear about that, sir; we'll use force if necessary."

"Let's hope it's not," Jahru said.

Gilbert stood up and watched the others rise politely with him. "I'm not making any decisions yet," he said slowly. "I want to feel myself again. I'm still not the President as far as I'm concerned. I have this memory block or whatever it is. Until I feel like the President, I'm not going to assume his position. I'm sorry if that disappoints you."

"Well—" Roderick began.

But Carley cut him short. "It's rather admirable, I think. We'll cure you, sir. The decision can wait a while longer. We'll treat you. You'll be as good as new in a few weeks. What they did can be undone. That is, if you're willing to submit patiently to treatment."

"Anything," Gilbert told him. "When can we start?"

"Right now, if you wish. Today."

"If any of you gentlemen think I ought to make an address, some statement—I'll be glad if you write a speech."

CARLEY SHOOK his head. "We'll wait, sir. The people have waited this long for you, there's no sense in them hearing you utter our words. We'll wait until you understand everything and can think for yourself."

Apparently, Gilbert realized with some confusion, the Rear Admiral had assumed command, pushing around higher officers as if he owned them. But Carley did seem the most sensible of the lot and he was certainly sympathetic with Gilbert's problem. "Lead on, Admiral," Gilbert said; "I'm eager to get started."

"So am I," Carley told him.

But there were certain necessary delays. A sleep-thinker had to be prepared with adequate information, Carley said. It was well that the President got some normal rest first, anyway. Carley would contact him. As for now, it was suggested Gilbert return to the White House with his Secret Service guard.

## VI

GILBERT suddenly found the delay to his liking. He had been swept up by Carley's enthusiasm but found, studying it objectively as he sped back across the Virginia border to-

ward the White House, that the enthusiasm had been irrational on his part. He was like a man groping around in darkness who all at once saw a light ahead and, unmindful of what lay between him and the light and ignorant of what caused it, was determined to reach it because he feared the dark. His mind had really been stripped by George and Sally, he told himself. He remembered nothing. He would have to take at face value what Carley and the others told him until his mind had re-established continuity with the past.

He thought again of his unknown wife. It seemed incredible to him that they had managed to keep her out of the picture. Had she been told it was for the best interests of the world and her husband if she waited in the background until he was well again? Being honest with himself, he realized he was glad of that, whatever the reason: this unknown woman, married to him for all these years but a total stranger now, would have presented a problem more difficult than all the others on a personal level. He wondered if he could find a picture of her in the White House.

Did they have any children? If they did, Gilbert told himself, they would seem

older than he was, old enough to be *his* father in all probability. Was that one of the reasons he had decided to outlaw natural childbirth? From a sociological point of view, it seemed advisable.

HE TAPPED the shoulder of the Secret Service man sitting near the driver in front of him. "Pardon me," he said, "what's your name?"

"Wilkerson, sir."

"Tell me, Wilkerson, do you have a family?"

"Why, yes sir."

"Like it?"

"Of course."

"Have you heard any talk about—well—"

"You mean ending families and things, sir?"

"Yes, Wilkerson."

"I've heard talk."

"What do you think?"

"Begging your pardon, sir, I'd rather not talk about it."

"Any particular reason?"

"I'm a public servant, sir; let's leave it that way, if you will."

Gilbert did not press the point. Wilkerson was merely one man; lacking all knowledge, he'd be ridiculous to base judgments on the opinion of one man. Random sampling, he thought wryly. One out of how many billion?

At last, they were in the White House. Gilbert looked for the familiar face of del-

Cove but found a stranger sitting at his desk.

"I wonder if you know where I can find Mr. delCove?"

"Sorry, sir; I couldn't say. He doesn't work here now."

"What do you mean? He was here this morning."

"He quit." The new man had a square-jowled poker face with wide-spaced, unfathomable eyes.

"Without any notice?"

"That is essentially correct, sir. As you probably suspected, the reporters are still here."

CARLEY would not have wanted him to see the reporters, he knew. Carley had a point, naturally. There was no sense in his bumbling his way through any press conferences without knowing what he was talking about. But vaguely, it bothered him. He was the President, not Carley. He smiled. That was the same as a small child resenting the authority of his parents who, obviously, were better qualified to render decisions.

"I'd like to learn about delCove," he said. If White House personnel were constantly changed, he'd be forever groping about in the dark—until Carley could straighten him out with the necessary treatment.

"I really couldn't say, sir. My name is Jamison, by the way."

"What about one of the assistant secretaries, Jamison?"

"Well, there's Miss K'halfa."

Gilbert opened the French doors leading to his library. "I'd like to see her, please," he said. He had seated himself in a comfortable chair and was adjusting the air-conditioning when a slim Negro woman in her mid-thirties entered the library behind him.

"I'm Betty K'halfa, Mr. President." She was scrupulously correct, he noticed, but somehow aloof.

"SIT DOWN, Miss. I'd like to ask you a few questions about delCove."

"Yes, sir."

"Basically, I'd like to know why he quit."

"Quit, sir? Mr. delCove was asked to resign. I thought you had—"

"No. The first I heard about it was a few minutes ago. Who asked him to resign?"

"I couldn't say, sir." Betty K'halfa's aloofness had melted before confusion. "I—I was led to believe you had ordered it yourself. If you don't mind me saying so, the move wasn't very popular with the



White House Staff. We liked Al delCove."

"So did I, Miss K'halfa. Isn't there any way we can find out who asked him to resign?"

"He received the message himself, sir. With a month's pay, I believe. I don't even know where we could reach him."

"What about Jamison, the new man?"

"I don't know much about him, sir. When he arrived he had a letter from Admiral Carley saying he was not only a first-rate secretary but a qualified psycho-nurse as well."

"Carley, eh? Tell me, Miss K'halfa—completely off the record—do you happen to know how Al delCove stood on the rebirth issue?"

"We talked about it often, Mr. President. Everyone does. I would say Al agreed with your own ideas on the subject, essentially."

He'd never keep the girl's confidence, he knew, if he asked her what his own ideas were. Instead, he said, "Do you know what's happened to me these last few weeks?"

**S**HE STARED at him strangely. "You were in an accident; you died. Your embryo was kidnapped by members of an extremist group, but you managed to escape.

There is some talk that they either kept some knowledge from you—concerning rebirth, mainly—or warped it so it wouldn't be of any use. Otherwise, the medical bulletin says you are in good health."

"Then if they kept that knowledge from me, that would also preclude my knowing about anything I might have decided concerning rebirth?"

"Yes, sir. I suppose so. I hadn't thought of it that way."

"What were my opinions on the matter, Miss K'halfa?"

Startled, the secretary stood up. "Honestly, I don't think—"

"What's the matter?"

"Well, it's not my place to discuss that with—"

"Why on earth not? I'm asking you to do it, Miss K'halfa."

"I was told—"

"By whom, Miss?"

"I think I'd better not say sir."

"Is this room wired or something? What's the matter, anyway?"

"No, sir," said Miss K'halfa. "This room isn't wired." But she was pointing at the desk. No, under the desk. "There's nothing wrong at all."

**G**ILBERT crouched quickly and explored under the desk with his hands. Taped in place under the surface of

the desk itself he found a small, rectangular box. He tore it loose, dropped it, smashed it with his heel. "So someone was listening," he said. "I want you to tell me everything you know, Miss K'halfa."

"I hardly know anything, sir. But you should know this by now: there are extremist groups and extremist groups—and they're all not on one side of the fence. I'm sorry if I've spoken out of turn."

"Nonsense. That's exactly what I want. This is entirely off the record. Tell me, Miss K'halfa, I'm married, am I not?"

"Why—yes, sir."

"Has my wife ever tried to come here since my return?"

"But that's impossible, sir. As soon as word was received of your return, Admiral Carley suggested that Mrs. Gilbert undergo rebirth herself. After all, the discrepancy in your apparent ages *would* have been uncomfortable. Especially in your overwrought state, as Admiral Carley pointed out."

"I see. They got rid of my wife temporarily, then delCove. Miss K'halfa, is there anything wrong with our government?"

The girl grinned at him. "Books have been written on the subject."

"I mean from your own per-

sonal experience."

"Well—yes. I would say—"

There was a loud knock on the door. "Come in," Gilbert said.

**H**E WATCHED as the French doors swung in toward them. The man who had taken delCove's place, Jamison, stood there.

"All right, Miss K'halfa," he said. "You're dismissed. There are several briefs which you have to prepare, anyway."

"Just a minute now," Gilbert told him. "We were talking."

"Sorry, sir." The man balanced uneasily on one foot, then the other. He was nervous but held his ground. "Orders from Dr. Carley. You're not to be disturbed, especially by questionable people. You're to rest."

Gilbert scooped up the shattered microphone and shook it in Jamison's face. "Did you put this thing here? Answer me."

"I arranged for it to be placed under the desk, sir."

"Were you listening to us?"

"I—I was."

"O.K. We'll get to that in a minute. What did you mean, Miss K'halfa was questionable? Why is she working here, then?"

"Sir, I can't talk in front of her."

"Maybe Carley hired you,"

Gilbert said. "But I can fire you, don't forget that. Very well, we'll talk alone if you want. Miss K'halfa?"

"Yes, sir. I'm going."

WHEN HE was alone with Jamison, he said; "Now, what's this all about?"

"She's an extremist, sir. They've managed to infiltrate the White House staff, and elsewhere. Admiral Carley said you would forgive the microphone if you found it. We have to protect you—and the government."

"From what?"

"From yourself, perhaps. We can't be sure what they told you, what they did to your mind. Too much is at stake. If we have to risk our jobs, even if Admiral Carley has to risk his position, sir, it's worth that risk."

"Do you know where I can reach delCove?"

"No, sir. I do not." Gilbert tried to read the inscrutable eyes but failed.

"What are they going to do with me, Jamison?"

"To do with you, sir? To make you normal again. To fill in the blanks in your mind."

"Why didn't anyone tell me my wife was undergoing re-birth?"

"I don't know anything about that, sir."

"That's all, Jamison. Inci-

dentally, if Miss K'halfa doesn't keep her job, you don't. Is that clear?"

"You're telling me not to fire her?"

"That's exactly what I'm telling you. And I want you to send for Admiral Carley."

"He's coming to start the treatment tomorrow, sir."

"I want to see him today. Now."

Half an hour later, when Gilbert tried to go out for a walk, a guard politely barred the door. He had been told to permit no one to enter or leave. Did that include the President? He was sorry, sir, it did.

That's just fine, thought Gilbert. The President, a prisoner in the White House. He looked for Betty K'halfa but could find her nowhere.

He tried to leave by another exit, but it also was barred to him. He searched his own private quarters, all completely unfamiliar to him. There were no papers written in his hand, none signed with his signature. He would have to regain his lost knowledge Admiral Carley's way or not at all. There were no pictures of a woman who could have been his wife. There was nothing which could trigger his lost memory for him, although at this point he hardly considered that possible.

He took a nap and had din-

ner and was determined to escape.

**THIS WAS** one for the history books, Gilbert decided. He was engaging one of the guards at the East Gate in conversation meaninglessly, all the while angling for an opportunity to slug the man and flee. He felt lithe, strong, capable. A President the apparent age of twenty-five certainly had his advantages.

"I'm sorry you don't remember, Mr. President. My name is Barry. Been on this gate since you got the job, sir. You like it or you don't stay. I like it here."

"At least you don't have to depend on getting elected. The job's steady."

Barry chuckled, rolling phlegm around in his throat. "Say, that's all right."

It was the third time he had made Barry laugh. He was doing fine.

"You don't sound sick to me, sir. I mean—" Barry flushed crimson in the dim light. "I didn't mean—"

"They said I was sick."

"I'm terribly sorry, sir. They said it was temporary; you'll be all right soon."

"Meanwhile I'm not to leave."

"Yes, sir."

**THE JOKES** were fine—but Barry knew his job. The

man seemed about forty, but there wasn't an ounce of spare flesh on him. Gilbert began to feel like the rankest amateur and realized the longer he waited the more obvious his intentions would become.

He placed a cigaret between his lips and asked the guard for a light. Barry cupped the flame in his hands, leaning forward. Abruptly, Gilbert butted the man's chin with his head, then swung both fists in at his kidneys. Barry yelped and stumbled back, clutching his left side and hollering. Gilbert took two quick steps out into darkness and freedom when something struck him from behind. He struck out blindly and started to turn around, but his arm had been forced up and back and the slightest movement threatened to break it. He subsided.

"I'm sorry, sir," Barry panted. "I hate to do this. I don't know. They figured you would try something. I was praying it wouldn't be here. I got a job. I got to take orders. I'm sorry, sir. I'm not hurting you, am I?"

"You are."

Barry grunted and eased the pressure. "Why did it have to be me?" he said. He sounded like he was going to cry.

"Did it ever occur to you that they're keeping me a prisoner against my will?"

"That's way over my head,"

Barry pleaded. "They told me what I had to do."

A VOICE called through the darkness. "Everything under control over there, Barry?"

"Sure is."

"Unfortunately," Gilbert said.

"Sir, it hurts me more than it hurts you. I'm going to have to march you up to your room and lock you in. That's what they said. Honest, it hurts me more."

"That hardly helps me."

"Will you promise to behave if I let you go?" Barry asked hopefully.

"Absolutely not; you're making a tragic mistake, Barry."

"That's good," Barry had raised his voice. "You promise not to escape, so I guess I don't have to hold you."

The pressure on his arm was gone. He gaped at the guard.

"Get a move on, sir," Barry hissed. "Make it look good. And don't maim me, please; that's all I ask."

Gilbert plucked the pistol from Barry's holster, his heart drumming wildly.

"Right between the eyes, sir. Hurry up."

Kill him? His mind was still not oriented to the rebirth. Kill him? But it was better than maiming and it would give Barry an alibi. He'd lose

a few weeks at most and probably be twenty instead of forty afterwards.

Barry started to shout. There was the sound of rapid footsteps approaching. Gilbert aimed the pistol, fired, turned away as Barry groaned, and fled.

## VII

THIS LATE at night, the Lincoln Memorial was deserted, although the lights which shone on that great seated statue of another president almost seemed to make the white marble come alive.

Gilbert had been tracked almost at once and now, less than two hours after his flight, they were closing in. He could hear voices faintly. They had him and they knew it.

He was sick. It was common knowledge. He couldn't be held responsible for his actions. They would be doing the country a great service if they took him. Every loyal policeman in Washington was probably part of the chase.

Behind him were the dark waters of the Potomac and the old Arlington Memorial Bridge, still standing. Vehicular lights blinked on the bridge. It was still the most picturesque way to enter the capital, although two tunnels

had long since replaced it for all but sight-seeing purposes.

He watched the tiny figures fan out toward him and around the Monument as they reached the edge of the second reflecting pool. In another few moments they would be climbing the eminence of land upon which the Monument had been erected so long ago. They would take him soon. They would be strangely sycophantic captors, but captors nevertheless. There was no escape.

**I**T HAD only been hours ago, but it seemed so long—del-Cove had tried to tell him something. If he could ferret that fact out of the confusion in his mind now, escape might still be possible.

What fact?

It was there, tormenting him.

Now the voices were clearer. He heard them calling him. Come down, Mr. President. Come down. Here, kitty, kitty, kitty. He was crazy; he was deranged, at the very least. His own personal physician had said so. It was obvious. They wanted to cure him.

There are extremists and extremists, the Negro secretary had said. They had set the fact clearly before him, his Chiefs of Staff. The enemies—the extremists—had taken his embryo and developed an

incomplete man, lacking knowledge. They couldn't kill him. He would live again, out of their power. They had to keep watch over him all the days of his life. They had failed.

The other extremists?

They had had him in their power too, but differently. He lacked knowledge. They were going to provide it. Simple. Simpler. They didn't have to keep constant vigil. They merely had to fill in the blanks as they saw fit. They permitted him no other avenue of information in the interim, Carley and all the others. Why? Because they knew his original viewpoint had differed with theirs as much as it had differed with the other extremists.

**C**ARLEY HAD been able to push around his superior officers. Obviously. It was the final touch. Carley would control his re-education. Carley had a stranglehold on the entire situation. Carley might gather four stars or five in the process.

He could hear their anxious voices clearly now, yet they held back as if they were afraid of something. They could have stormed the Monument without any trouble and taken him. Instead they waited.

There was a droning noise.

overhead. Gilbert saw the lights of an aircraft, dimly made out their gleam on the whirling rotors as the helicopter hovered. A voice boomed at him:

THIS IS ADMIRAL CARLEY, MR. PRESIDENT. YOU ARE COMPLETELY SURROUNDED NOW. WE HOPE YOU WILL BE REASONABLE BEFORE YOU HARM YOURSELF OR ANY OF THE COURAGEOUS MEN TRYING TO SAVE YOU FROM YOURSELF. THERE WON'T BE ANY BLOODSHED IF YOU SURRENDER.

That was part of it too, part of what he failed to understand. They were holding back. Waiting. It had something to do with what deCove wanted to suggest, but Carley had dismissed the secretary first.

A cool night breeze rolled in over the Potomac. Carley turned with it and breathed deeply, then saw the words carved in marble on the wall. That other president had had grave external problems, but at least could face them with a full mind. No. Self-pity was not the answer.

He read the words there in the dim light.

*Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and*

*dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.*

Courageous words, if he remembered his history. Prophetic words.

Prophetic.

*Created equal.*

THEY WERE waiting for him. They did not press their attack at Carley's orders. Carley did not want to chance it. Something might happen to Gilbert.

Gilbert might even be killed.

YOU'RE SICK, MR. PRESIDENT, the voice boomed again. WE KNOW YOU'RE ARMED. WE DON'T WANT ANYONE HURT. PLEASE THROW AWAY YOUR WEAPON AND COME DOWN. WE CAN CURE YOU. EVERYTHING WILL BE ALL RIGHT.

Killed and—reborn.

Created once again, identically. Another Robert Gilbert. All men were created equal.

That was his final weapon. That was what Carley had to keep from him at all costs. Somewhere, some unknown place, sane, objective men would develop the new embryo—or perhaps it was largely automatic. But there would be another Robert Gilbert, a complete Robert Gilbert.

He was not oriented to it. Death still seemed like—

death. But the plump man who had driven him into the city had not been concerned about it at all. And the guard, Barry, had welcomed it to give him a chance to escape.

He did not know enough. It all could have been wrong.

**A**NOTHER trick? What did he know about rebirth, really? What the Chiefs of Staff had told him, nothing more. But delCove had been fired when he was trying to suggest the very same thing.

The plump man was not a part of any of this.

Barry? It didn't matter.

WE'RE WAITING FOR YOUR ANSWER, MR. PRESIDENT. I SPEAK NOT FOR MYSELF, BUT FOR THE WORLD WHICH NEEDS YOU.

But the world knew nothing. The reporters were not even permitted to see him. Miss K'halfa had said his wife was undergoing rebirth too. Another plant? It hardly seemed likely. They had to get her out of the way long enough to implant their knowledge.

But he lacked a cultural familiarity with dying and rebirth. Carley must have known that. Carley was extremely confident.

And if Carley did not want him to die, it meant Carley had no control over the devel-

opment of the next embryo.

Some figures had reached the broad marble steps now, were climbing.

He waited until he could see their faces, anxious, intent, then raised the pistol to his temple and fired.

**"I** NEVER knew you looked so beautiful this young," President Gilbert told his wife.

"You forget easy, darling." She seemed radiantly happy. She came into his arms and he sensed everything was complete now. "I was so glad when they told me you had died again. I waited right here in the lab until the embryo had come to full term. I was a little afraid the damage might have been permanent."

"It couldn't be. But I'm still a little confused, I guess. I still have some memories of—well, of the incomplete Robert Gilbert."

"Perhaps the military mind is essentially egotistical. Admiral Carley and the others were determined to foist sterilization on the public. If we had a population problem, they wanted to solve it in a way that would keep them around forever."

"But I see it now. Sterilization would be tragic. The human species, like any other, mutates. We'd be calling a dead-end to evolution and sub-



stituting static immortality for it. But why couldn't I see the solution before?"

"They wouldn't let you, that's why."

"It's so clear now. First-termers have children. Second-termers, third, and so forth, don't. And everyone's happy. Sure, the population grows that way, but not chaotically. We can handle it with the yield from the chlorella farms. Eventually we'll find another answer, hundreds of years from now. We have plenty of time."

"But I'm still mixed up about the other extremists. Not Carley's group."

"Incidentally, I trust you're going to court-martial them, darling."

"I suppose so. They were left over from the last Administration and I should have paid more attention to them."

**S**HE GRINNED. "Stop being such a party man."

"Well, it's the truth. About that other group of extremists—"

"Darling, you are confused. There were no other extremists."

"I thought they wanted to do away with rebirth altogether. I can't see the point in that."

"That's what Carley must have told you, but it wasn't true. When you died in the

crash it was Carley's group which stole the embryo. The other group took it from them. They wanted to protect you."

"You call what they did protection?"

"They had to keep your mind blank like that until everything was safe. All your natural life if necessary. You see, you're pretty headstrong, dear, and they were in a position to know it. If you knew the score, you would have tried to do something about it. They weren't sure of the second embryo. They couldn't let you do anything until they were sure Carley couldn't touch it. By the time they found out, you had escaped."

"But I don't see—"

"Of course you do. If you died a second time and Carley *did* have control of the second embryo, he'd have had you where he wanted. As it turned out he didn't—and he doesn't."

"But that first group of extremists—"

**"NOT** EXTREMISTS, darling. Practical people. Middle-of-the-roaders who agreed perfectly with the decision you made."

"One of them was killed, though. They were fighting among themselves."

"Yes, Sally did kill George."

"You know them?"

"Certainly I know them."

His wife was smiling again. "Unfortunately, people can be fooled. Carley's plans were long-range. Sally was one of his people. George didn't know. She wanted to awaken you prematurely, that's all."

"But Sally was George's wife."

"People make mistakes in marriage. And George isn't perfect. You ought to know that."

"Well, I'm not sure I do."

The laboratory door opened and a young man walked in. He looked familiar, somewhat younger, but—it was George!

Two memory-paths fought inside Gilbert's brain. There was George, the keeper of the compound, and there was

someone else. No, George was no extremist. Naturally, Gilbert's wife knew what she was talking about. But the memory of the compound was still stronger than anything else. When he knew nothing and George seemed almost a god. He felt filial toward the man and sensed it was wrong. The old memories were flooding back.

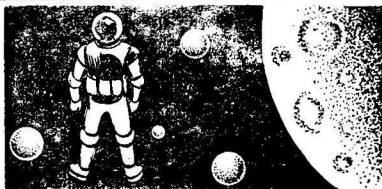
"You ought to know George isn't perfect," Gilbert's wife repeated. "All in all, though, we did a pretty good job, Gilbert."

George grinned from ear to ear. "You had us worried there for a while, father," he said.



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*Numerous science fiction and fantasy authors have used various myths in their stories. Where did they find them? Here a bit of lowdown on*

# THE MYTHOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

by L. SPRAGUE de CAMP

**W**HEN ONE of my colleagues or I use a myth as a background for a story, or to bolster a theory, we don't go to an Indian reservation and ask the medicine-man to tell us the legends of his people, or dig up and translate a Babylonian clay tablet. We read it out of a book. And how did it get into the book in the first place?

That depends. A written version of a myth is merely the myth as it existed in some one man's mind at the time it was reduced to writing. The same myth taken down from somebody else or at another time might be quite different.

A written version of a myth is thus like a still photograph of something that is actually moving or changing all the time. To try to understand how myths originate and develop, from a single written version, is like trying to fathom the rules of baseball from one photograph of a game in progress.

When a good anthropologist transcribes a myth nowadays, he takes it down verbatim in the myth-teller's own language, even using a phonographic recorder if possible. Translations and interpretations are kept rigidly distinct from the original. Until a century ago, however, myths

were subjected to all sorts of mangling in the process of recording. The transcriber not only made the record in his own language, but also transformed the teller's concepts into those he knew. Thus when the Romans said the Gauls worshipped Mercury, they really referred to the stag-horned Cernunnos, a Keltic fertility-god who had charge of the forests and the under-world.

As an ancient or medieval version of a myth gives only a static picture of it, and often a badly distorted one at that, the idea procedure would be to take such a snapshot at intervals over many centuries. But that is rarely possible—in the past because anthropologists only came into existence a century ago, and in the future because the world's primitive cultures are fast dissolving under the impact of more advanced cultures. Where the myths of the primitives have not been destroyed they have often been contaminated, as in the case of the Hawaiian myth of Nuu (Noah) which I cited in "Faery Lands Forlorn." (*Science Fiction Stories*, November 1955)

**R**ARELY INDEED can we follow the parallel development of history and

myth to determine their relationship. In the older civilizations, the myths were reduced to writing as soon as writing came into use, and the mere existence of written versions helped to freeze them at that point. Such myths therefore belong to the period before written history, and there is little overlap between the two.

That is why the histories of ancient peoples start with a Golden Age or a Garden of Eden when the gods walked the earth. The tyronic historian has tried to splice together two quite different things: fictional myths and factual history, believing them equally true. In the Bible, the splice occurs about the time of King Saul, when the Hebrews began keeping written records. Everything earlier—Adam and Noah, Abraham and Moses—is more or less mythical.

In medieval Europe, however, we can follow the development of some legends from the facts on which they were based to fully fictional form, because of the coincidence that for several centuries there was a very small literate class who wrote, however, not in the vernacular languages of the various countries but in Latin, while the vernacular prose and poetry of these lands evolved

almost without the help of the written word and therefore afford a fair parallel to the way those things develop among primitives.

**WE FIND**, then, that such legends as the cycles of Dietrich and Charlemagne start out as tales based on fact and end up with hardly any of that ingredient. Troubadours, minnesingers, and minstrels felt no responsibility at all to stick to facts or to pass on a tradition in the form in which they received it. Like Robert E. Howard, they picked persons, names, and incidents from any land and any century that suited their purpose, so that while some elements of their epoi have a historical basis, the combinations that came into being resembled nothing real on land or sea.

Moreover the prominence of people and events in with legends have little to do with their importance in real life. Thus they never mention King Clovis, one of the most important men of the entire Dark Ages. Perhaps the fact that Clovis was a hard-boiled adventurer-politician of the stamp of William the Conqueror and Cesare Borgia made him an unsuitable subject for romance.

The romancers' powers of invention, while not unlimit-

ed, were real. Hence legends changed out of all recognition with the centuries. Also, they were willing to use bits of story from any source. As a result medieval legendry is full of mangled fragments of history, Judaeo-Christian biblical lore, Hebrew legendry, wonders out of Pliny's encyclopaedia, Graeco-Roman mythology, Oriental fantasies, and bodies of European pre-Christian pagan mythology disguised to get by the Church.

Take, for instance,

...mage Merlin, whose vast  
wit  
And hundred winters are but  
as the hands  
Of loyal vassals toiling for  
their liege...  
Merlin, who knew the range  
of all their arts,  
Had built the King his havens,  
ships, and halls,  
Was also bard, and knew the  
starry heavens...

**OF THE** two best-known versions of Merlin's life, the accounts by Geoffrey of Monmouth and Sir Thomas Malory, the former gives Merlin's birth and early life; the latter, his latter life and end. Combining the two we have the following tale:

The post-Roman British king Vortigern invited in the Saxons under Hengist and Horsa to protect the Britons against Danes and other bar-

barians. When strife arose between Vortigern's British subjects and Saxon mercenaries, he began to build a tower to which he could flee, but every night the masonry was swallowed up. The magicians told Vortigern to find a youth that never had a father and sacrifice him on the site. At Carmarthen in Wales the king's messengers found a boy, Merlin Ambrose, the son of a princess and a handsome male spirit.

At Vortigern's court, Merlin, learning what was in store for him, demanded that Vortigern's magicians tell what was under the foundation that made the stones disappear. When they could not do so, Merlin explained that if workmen dug down they would find two stones, each of which when broken open would be found to contain a dragon. This was done. The dragons awoke, fought, and disappeared. Merlin then gave a long prophetic speech in the best tradition of Nostadamian gobbledygook, in which he foretold the conquest of the Britons (symbolized by the red dragon) by the Saxons (denoted by the white).

**I**MPRESSED, Vortigern spared Merlin. Then the Keltic chiefs Aurelius Ambrosius and Uther Pendragon

invaded Britain from the Continent and burned Vortigern in his tower. Merlin became adviser to Aurelius when the latter became king, and subsequently to Uther when Uther succeeded his brother. Merlin supervised the upbringing of Uther's son Arthur, and when Arthur was a youth, Merlin staged the test of pulling the sword out of the stone that showed Arthur to be the true king. Thereafter Merlin advised Arthur by his prophecies and helped him to win battles by magic. Nobody ever profited from the prophecies, however. The wizard foretold that he would "die a shameful death and be put in the earth quick" (alive) but that nothing could be done about it.

While Arthur and his knights were having highly mythical adventures including the conquest of Europe and the defeat of the army of the Roman Emperor, Merlin fell in love with Nimue, a lady of Arthur's court. "And so on a time it happened that Merlin showed to her a rock whereas was a great wonder, and wrought by enchantment, that went under a great stone." To get rid of his elderly importunities, Nimue "made Merlin to go under the stone to let her wit of the marvels there, but she wrought so there for him

that he never came out for all the craft he could do."

Now, where does all this come from?

**T**HE EARLIEST account of the Saxon conquest, and the only one with even a pretense of historicity, is the *"Destruction and Conquest of Britain"* written in the sixth century by the Breton monk Gildas. Though the work is a sermon rather than a history, Gildas says that a British king, Guthrigern, invited the Saxons in; that fighting arose between them and the Britons; and that the latter, under the leadership of a noble Romano-Briton, Ambrosius Aurelianus, beat the Saxons at Badon Hill (location unknown). There is nothing about Hengist and Horsa, Arthur, or Merlin. Though Gildas is hardly a reliable source, the characters he mentions may well have lived.

Next comes the *"History of the Britons"* by Nennius, three or four centuries after Gildas, on whose work it is partly based. This is such a mass of miracles and anachronisms as to be historically worthless, but it does introduce several elements of the Arthurian cycle of legends. It mentions a King Ambrosius and tells of the crumbling tower. King Guorthigirn's messengers find the boy

Ambrose who discloses the underground pool with its dragons (here serpents). These fighting reptiles were probably suggested by the two dragons which Mardochaeus dreamed of in the apocryphal twelfth chapter of *Esther*.

In Nennius, Ambrose's mother says that his was a virgin birth, but Ambrose himself states that his father was a Roman consul. Finally there is the first mention of King Arthur, who beats the Saxons in twelve great battles, the last on Badon Hill. Thus the original Ambrose Aurelianus of Gildas, probably a real man, has split like an amoeba into three characters: "King Ambrosius," the prophetic boy Ambrose, and lastly King Arthur, who is credited with the warlike deeds originally attributed to Ambrose Aurelianus. The name "Arthur" is probably that of a pre-Christian Celtic god of agriculture, called Arthur by the Irish and Artaius by the Gauls.

(In fact, an "Artur the Great" is named among the chiefs of the Children of Nemed in the chapter called "The Conquest of Nemed" from the Irish *"Book of Invasions,"* which chapter was put into verse about the year 1000 by the Irish poet Eochaid O'Flainn. Nemed the son of

Agnoman was the leader of a band of "Greeks of Scythia" who invaded Ireland, which shows the scrambled geographical ideas that existed in the heads of O'Flainn and his fellow-bards. Artur, a son of Nemed, was one of those who went in a delegation to the Fomhorian king Conann to complain about high taxes. Eventually—Howard fans note—the tyrannical Conann was slain in battle with the Nemedians.)

THEN THE twelfth-century priest Geoffrey of Monmouth expanded the tale further in his "*History of the Kings of Britain*," no history at all but a pseudo-history on the model of Virgil and other epic poets. It begins with the fictitious arrival in Britain of a band of Trojan exiles under Brutus. While it sometimes touches upon historical events like Caesar's invasion of Britain, it is otherwise almost pure romance and begat progeny like Shakespeare's King Lear, whose name Geoffrey took from that of the Keltic sea-god Llyr or Ler, and whose story he lifted from the legend of Barlaam and Jehospat, which in turn came ultimately from India. Geoffrey's main sources were Nennius, the Charlemagne epics, and Ro-

man, Greek, and Jewish myths and legends. The last included some of the stories of King Solomon and the demon Ashmedai, and the tale of the fabulous birth of Jesus ben Shirach, the supposed author of *Ecclesiasticus*, which was transferred to Merlin.

Geoffrey added the name "Merlin" to the "Ambrose" of Nennius, but we don't know where he got it. Welsh poems of doubtful date mention a "Myrddin" or "Merddin" (spelled many ways). Maybe Geoffrey got the name from such a source, or perhaps the borrowing was the other way round.

GEOFFREY also wrote a Latin poem, the "*Life of Merlin*," which tells an entirely different tale. This Merlin is a king of Demetia (Demetia, modern Pembrokeshire in Wales) who, going mad when his brothers are slain in battle, retires to the Caledonian forest. He recovers his senses and sometimes visits the court of his brother-in-law King Rodarch to show off his prophetic powers, but ends his days as a hermit.

This yarn is a member of a whole family of Keltic legends about an eremitic prophet named Suibhne (pronounced Sivna) by the Irish,



and Lailoken by the Strathclyde Britons. Some elements of Geoffrey's version seem to have come a long way: one anecdote clear from India. The story tells how the prophet (in this case Merlin) laughs three times—once at a queen, because he knows by occult means that she has been entertaining a lover; once at a beggar, whom he knows to be sitting over a buried treasure; and once at a youth buying shoes, because he knows the youth will never live to wear them.

The central character in this poem is perhaps in origin a humanized Keltic forest-god, possibly connected with the Gaulish *Cernunnos*. Whether the original name of this god was something like "Merlin" or whether as some think the name was that of a real sixth-century Welsh bard, nobody really knows.

Later romancers, both British and Continental, developed the story of Merlin still further. They composed several versions of his end, one of which Malory adopted for his "Mort d'Arthur," and described him as visiting Julius Caesar, making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, studying under Virgil (whom the story-tellers had transformed from the gentle poet of Mantua into a mighty magician who, among other feats,

built a bridge of solid air across the Mediterranean in order to kidnap the daughter of the Sultan of Egypt), and performing countless thaumaturgies. In the eighteenth century he was revived as a fictional character by the German dramatist Immermann, and later he was used by Tennyson, Mark Twain, and many recent fantasy-writers.

But who, reading a modern Merlinesque fantasy (like MacDonald's "Enchanted Weekend," Kuttner's "Wet Magic," C. S. Lewis's "That Hideous Strength," or Pratt's and my "Castle of Iron") would guess the many sources from which this vital if synthetic character has grown? General Aurelian Ambrose, Jesus ben Shirach, the demon Ashmedai, a legendary Hindu prophet, and a nameless Keltic sylvan deity?

**N**OW THAT we have some idea of how myths originate and grow, and what purposes they serve, we can look at them from another angle: the psychological or psychoanalytical. We can, that is, consider them as projections on the world of the imagination of things in the minds of the myth-makers. In late years more and more attention has been paid to this

aspect of myths, with interesting results.

The psychological significance of myths is especially obvious in those myths that I have called homiletic: the sermon-type. These range from myths in which the moral is baldly and explicitly stated to those in which it is subtly implicit. In addition there are many myths in which there is no obvious moral but where nevertheless the myth can be traced back to the thoughts, feelings, and events of human childhood.

**N**OW, MYTHS of the kind that you read in *Bullfinch*—the *Classical*, Norse, and the like—have been organized and written down as part of the sacred scriptures of some more or less civilized nation, and their editors and transcribers have, perhaps unconsciously given them a logical and coherent form. On the other hand as we seek out myths from more and more “raw” and primitive sources, as by asking a Calapalo Indian who made the world and recording his reply, the morals become less plain. Such myths tend to take on a formless, dreamy, illogical character, as if they had been squirted directly out of the unconscious without any sophis-

ticated editing to adapt them to their audience.

This unliterary character is particularly evident in the myths of the Americas. The long separation of the American Indians from the cultural sources of the Old World resulted in their myths’ developing along lines markedly different from those of the Old World. Thus while Arabian or Chinese myths strike a Westerner as basically familiar and understandable, New-World myths are apt to give a curious surrealistic effect of strangeness and incomprehensibility. Much the same thing is seen in New-World painting and sculpture, for while the civilizations of the Old World, though differing among themselves, have been in contact so long that each has influenced all the others, the arts in the New World developed without any influence from the Old. Hence the curious effect that Mayan sculpture, for instance, makes.

**A**S AN example of a New-World myth, consider the Iroquois story “The Boy Magician.” The boy disobeys his grandmother’s warning not to go west. When he comes to a lake, a voice threatens to break his grandmother’s house by a hurricane. The boy hastens home and turns the house to stone

by his own magic before the storm arrives. On a second trip the boy saves the house from a hailstorm in the same manner. Then he returns to the lake for the third time and sees a head with a face on every side of it sticking up out of the water. After some more mutual insults, the boy throws a magical stone into the lake which causes the water to boil away. On the mud of the bottom the boy finds his supernatural foe in the form of a large green frog, which he slays with a stick.

And that is all: a perfect dream-type narrative in which things "just happen" without rhyme or reason. But then perhaps an Iroquois would find the adventures of Odysseus just as puzzling.

Most Old-World myths, however, are not too hard to understand. There are, as I have said, the obvious moral homilies and parables like the story of Pandora, whose moral might be stated as "leave well enough alone" or "curiosity killed a cat." And there are myths designed to warn the hearer that "pride goeth before a fall," such as the flying-myths of Phaethon and Ikaros, each of whom came to grief for breaking the local flying-regulations.

Then there are the myths in which, though no moral is

explicitly stated, the myth still reflects the psychological facts of life. The great Freud took advantage of this fact to name some of the complexes and compulsions of the human psyche (a name from Greek mythology) after the appropriate characters in myths.

Hence the rivalry of sons with their fathers for the affection of their mothers becomes the Oedipus complex, after Oidipous, the prince of Thebes who, growing up in ignorance of his heritage, inadvertently kills his father, King Laios, and subsequently marries his mother Iokaste or Jocasta. Superficially the myth is a warning against the sin of incest; but the deeper meaning, according to Freud, is that such unlawful desires are a widespread human attribute.

**L**IKEWISE NARCISSISM, the Narcissus complex, is named for Narkissos, the youth who fell in love with his own reflection in a pool and pined away until the gods turned him into a flower. The psychological fact reflected is that self-infatuation can make a person useless for any but purely decorative purposes.

The European folk-tale of Beauty and the Beast has a similar interpretation: the

fact that a person who has been abused and ill-treated acquires a beastly disposition, but that this may be cured to a degree by love and kindness—provided the “beast” can find somebody willing to undertake such a dubious task. And the transformation of the companions of Odysseus into swine by Kirke may be taken as an allegory of what passion at the sight of a beautiful woman can do to a man.

As we move farther from the more explicit and “edited” myths, we get into more tenuous interpretation of myths as projections of childhood experience. It is not hard to make such interpretations. You should remember, however, that the chain of cause and effect is weak, as it is in the more speculative chains of psychoanalytical dream-interpretation. Another interpreter may advance equally strong arguments for another interpretation. Here, however, are some that look pretty obvious:

The common giant-motif is probably based upon the fact that a small child lives in a world of giants.

A child often wishes to be strong enough to tell his elders where to get off. Hence the myths of muscular super-

men like Herakles, Gilgamesh, and Sampson, a family of near-eastern lion-slaying heroes, all probably related. Sampson is a Hebrew version of Gilgamesh with the name of the Babylonian sun-god Shamash. (Compare the modern Arabic word for sun, *shams*.) In any case stories provide wish-fulfillment for skinny youngsters who have to put up with intolerable bullying from their peers.

Or the child wishes he could overcome the tedious barriers of distance to escape his ill-wishers by flying. Hence the legends of flight with a broomstick, a flying horse, a magic carpet, or other device—a reflection of a common incident in wish-fulfillment dreams. I remember a childhood dream of my own in which I flew gracefully about by waving a pair of paper picnic-plates.

ONE WELL-DEVELOPED flying-legend is that of Abaris. The Greeks told of the wizard-priest Abaris of mythical Hyperborea. The Hyperboreans were supposed to live in the Far North, either on an island or on the Eurasiatic mainland. As no Greeks had been there, they imagined the Far North to be a fine place where people

lived for a thousand years. Apollo was so pleased by the worship tendered him by Abaris that he gave the priest a golden javelin on which Abaris flew all over the world. Abaris was supposed to have stopped a plague at Sparta to have made the Palladion, the statue of Athena that protected Troy from capture. Finally Abaris stopped at Crotona in Italy to take a course in occultism from Pythagoras (a real man whose existing biographies are at least half legend) before returning home.

Abaris' dart may be related to the magical javelin of Gilgamesh, which flew about at its owner's command. But beware of jumping to the conclusion that, because one concept resembles another, one must necessarily have been derived from the other. The genealogy of ideas is even more uncertain than that of men.

Or let us consider the myths of spirits and the afterworld. The whole idea of a ghost, spirit, or detachable soul surviving after the death of the body probably comes from the fact that one sometimes dreams of persons one knows to be dead. A primitive who has such dreams thinks that he has actually been visited by the departed

in some form or other. As the dead person is not around anywhere that the dreamer knows of, he must live in some inaccessible land of the dead.

**A**ND WHERE is this land of the dead? Many primitives like the Samoans put it in the West, perhaps because of a subconsciously felt analogy between a setting sun and a dying man. Hence the Elysian Fields of the Greeks. It is to the Far West that Odysseus goes to conjure up the shades of his friends by necromancy, so that he can seek advice from the blind seer Teiresias, and to hear the mournful remark of the shade of Achilles that he had rather be a poor man's serf than king over all the dead.

Homer's afterworld is not only in the West but also underground, as are many other afterworlds: the Hebrew Gehenna, the Babylonian Aralu, the Kiche Xiabalba to name a few. Why? Because burial is a common method of disposing of the dead. And when a child first realizes that he too will some day be put in a hole in the ground for good it may make a strong impression on him, especially if he is afraid of the dark or tends to claustrophobia. Hence the gloomy subterranean afterworlds.

THE JUDGMENT of the dead according to their deserts would seem to be a case of wishful thinking. Nearly everybody feels unfairly treated by the whips and scorns of time, and in reverie reflects on how in a properly organized universe he would at last have all the wrongs he had suffered made up to him, while his foes and oppressors would be punished. The Church Father Tertullian went into a perfect frenzy in describing his hell: "What sight shall wake my wonder, what my laughter, my joy and exultation, as I see those kings, those great kings...groaning in the depths of darkness! And the magistrates who persecuted in the name of Jesus, liquifying in fiercer flames than any they kindled in their rage against the Christians! Those sages, too, the philosophers blushing before their disciples as they blaze together..." And so on, in a transport of sadistic gloating, he describes with drooling malvolence the roasting of actors, charioteers, poets, athletes, and everybody else whom he didn't like, and Tertullian disliked a tremendous lot of people.

Oidipous, too, has more psychological aspects than those implied by the term "Oedipus complex." His tale

embodies the common motif, which also occurs in the legends of the birth of Sargon, Cyrus, Moses, Joseph, Romulus, Deirdre, and many others, of the abandoned child of noble birth who is brought up in humble circumstances but whose true lineage is revealed at the critical moment. This motif probably reflects the fact that it is common for children who are not getting along well with their parents to daydream of being not the children of these parents at all, but of some nobler and more impressive progenitors who will some day come to them.

And then, you remember, when Oidipous answered the riddle of the Sphinx (what goes on four legs in the morning, on two in the afternoon...) he caused the monster to leap off the cliff and kill herself. I suspect that Oidipus was merely doing what every schoolchild, who has been shamed or scolded before the class by being asked a question he couldn't answer, would like to do to his teacher. The Legends of this class are also widespread, and if the riddle asked seems silly, so probably do most of the questions that teachers ask children seem silly to the children.

If you wish to go on with

such interpretations, there is no end to them. Thus you can equate dryads, nymphs, and other fairies with the imaginary playmates that lonesome children invent.

And the seer Teiresias, mentioned *supra*, lost his sight as punishment for having blundered upon Athena when she was bathing. Aktai-on was turned into a stag by Artemis and killed by hounds for a similar indiscretion. Meaning? Well, many children have been scolded or punished because they burst in upon their parents at a moment when the latter were particularly anxious not to be disturbed...

IT IS annoying to have to lend a discussion of a controversial question with a mealy-mouthed statement that "there is something to all these ideas." But that seems to be the fact with regard to theories of mythology. Myths are of diverse origins and serve many purposes and develop in various ways. They are useful in giving sidelights on the culture of a nation and the psychology of its folk. They may even hint at lost historical facts, and many are beautiful or entertaining in themselves.

But there is no easy, obvious, or universal interpretation of them. They cannot

be safely used by themselves to recover lost history, or to bolster eccentric theories of colliding comets. Though they often have a basis of fact, the factual part may be so small and so muddled and distorted by time that nobody can reconstruct the history from the legend alone.

As the historian Grote said: "The lesson must be learnt, hard and painful even though it may be, that no imaginable reach of the critical acumen will of itself enable us to discriminate fancy from reality, in the absence of a tolerable stock of evidence." We could not recover the history of Theodoric the Great if the Dietrich-legends were our only source, since the legends, for instance, do not mention the Roman Empire—which is like a life of George Washington without the British Empire.

And if our civilization fell and its history were replaced by legends of the Dietrich-type, we might have the saga of President Abraham Jefferson Roosevelt, who married Queen Victoria; invented the automobile; beat the Japanese at the Battle of New Orleans by slaying their emperor, Sitting Bull, in single combat; and finally departed for the moon in a flying saucer, promising to return when his people needed him!



Clothes make the Martian, too!

# THE BLOOMERS OF SHIZAR

by **CHARLES A. STEARNS**

*Illustrated by Luton*

**T**HE GAUNT and morose man plodded through an ochre haze of dust toward the Martian line settlement, which was a thin sierra of spired towers, stretching endlessly across the face of the mare.

The night-seep of oxygen was already thinning upon the sun-baked flats. Heat devils danced below the rim of a black, airless escarpment, and dry-mouth images mocked the man, who could wonder (in his present oxygen-starved hiatus) if those crimson towers might not be a mirage too.

The panorama was one of immense quietude and apparent desolation. The gaunt man remembered reading somewhere that Earth astronomers of the twentieth century had



considered Mars both uninhabited and uninhabitable.

Sergeant Miller, of the South Mars Colonial Police, also considered it uninhabitable; and as for being uninhabited, he wished to God it was.

Before Sergeant Miller, at this moment, marched a tumescent horror, one of those gourd-shaped refutations of biological logic within our solar system, a Low Martian. And each time that the gaunt man remembered how this creature had carelessly guided their sand-cycle into an impassable waddy or fissure, so that they were forced to go on afoot, he would prod it in its nameless after-region with the barrel of his zzt rifle—an act which caused it to spring into the air with a shrill hiss, but not to hurry. It had loved riding in the side car, and it hated walking.

A Low Martian is anatomically similar to a High Martian, except that the testudinal shells, both fore and aft, are smaller, and more cramped, and the anterior eye-stalks are somewhat closer together, graphically indicating the reason for its servile role in Martian society.

**H**IGH MARTIANS are, in general, patricians, statesmen, or at very least gentlemen, whom the conquer-

ing Earthlings have found to be not less aware of the spiritual and social values than themselves.

A Low Martian, on the other hand, is likely to be narrow-minded, cruel, treacherous and avaricious. While High Martians are conceded to be very high-minded indeed—perhaps even higher than the blibly-lipped priest talkers of Sharnus, Venus Four—a Low Martian is so low as to be almost vulgar. (Sergeant Miller considered them even lower than the degenerate Marsmen, or “Marties”, the native-born descendants of early Terran prospectors, adventurers, and the doubting-Thomas astronomers, who had been the very first to settle on Mars, in order to train their telescopes upon the outer planets, and declare them uninhabitable.)

Yet it was a High Martian that he now sought, a poor philosopher, now a murderer and a fugitive. Shizar (the name, translated, means “The Serene One”) was hiding, Sergeant Miller had been certain for days, somewhere here in Erythria. A Martian will nearly always return to his native mare. But there were so many canal-dwellings, built with monotonous severity upon the criss-cross desert routes of South Mars, that even Sergeant Miller would not have located him for months except

for this willing informer—this excrescence—to guide him. The Low Martian answered, diffidently, to the name of Koomar (translation: "He Of The Scaly Belly"), and had once been the devoted servant—or perhaps catechumen of Shizar, whom he now perfidiously betrayed.

There was gall and wormwood in the policeman's heart, however, which had nothing to do with the odor of Koomar, the heat, the vanishing oxygen, or the bunions upon his feet.

SERGEANT MILLER was thirty one years old, and felt forty. He had been nine years upon Mars without a furlough, and he wanted to go home. Within a very few days, replacements from Earth would arrive at Marsopolis, and senior policemen who applied for transfer to Terra would doubtless get it. Sergeant Miller, however, was three thousand miles from Marsopolis, and headed in the wrong direction.

It was all too apparent that if he did not catch up with Shizar in the canal village ahead, he would not even get back in time to wave the boys goodbye, much less to put in his own application for transfer.

He dreamed of the green land, and a white cottage upon

the Mediterranean, and a trim sailing yacht the way that most men dreamed of a woman. Sergeant Miller, who was a confirmed bachelor, dreamed only vaguely and unsatisfactorily of women, so far as the esthetics of the thing were concerned.

Had it not been for the case of Shizar, he might now be packing for the joyous voyage home. Instead, looming like a vast toad between him and his desires, was Koomar, the Low Martian.

In Koomar's time, he had been all things to all people; that is to say, all things unpleasant. He counted eighteen years in various prisons of Mars for crimes ranging from *narsinthe* smuggling to confidence. He had been arrested twice by Sergeant Miller himself.

A good many years ago, Koomar had attached himself—as a sort of uninvited disciple—to the person of Shizar, the High Martian, in the way that Low Martians often do, and acted now not merely as an ordinary stoolpigeon. Koomar happened to be the state's only eyewitness to the shocking murder which had put out patrols all over South Mars in search for the killer.

The peculiar case of the murdering philosopher involved two factors but for which none of it—the killing,

the chase, Sergeant Miller's misalliance with Koomar—could ever have happened at all.

**T**HE FIRST concerned the peculiar habiliment affected by most High Martians. This was a pantaloon-like garment, covering its wearer voluminously from head to foot, gathered simply at each elephantine ankle and at the throat, so that all except the tentacles was covered. These were worn upon all official, or semi-formal occasions, and their resemblance to a certain historic undergarment was responsible for the name given them by the first planeteters on Mars. They were called ceremonial bloomers.

The ancient and eccentric old philosopher, Shizar, wore them at all times, and not even the threat of ridicule could make him remove them. No one living, either man or Martian, could remember having seen Shizar without his bloomers.

This caused many Low Martians (who are of a very jealous nature) to make fun of him. Low Martians wore nothing at all, excepting scowls.

The second fact was that all Martians looked exactly alike to humans newly arrived to Mars, one of whom was the new Colonial Administrator. In his second week of office

it had occurred to the Administrator that it would be a brilliant idea to stencil each Martian's name and genealogical symbol upon the horny pectoral plate of the ventral shell, so that he could tell one from another. That it was *not* a brilliant idea was not the Commissioner's fault. He was not a brilliant man.

The Low Martians had objected to the branding from the first, saying that they were not *shataloe* (cattle), and a coalition of Marsmen, who were sympathetic, and High Martians were prepared to take it to the courts.

The Marties resisted every new colonial law, while they kept busily at work, breaking the old ones.

In the end it had been decided to pay all of the High Martians satraps and spiritual leaders such as Shizar, four hundred credits apiece to submit to the new law, and thus set an example before their minions. Practically all of them agreed at once, since four hundred credits is quite a lot of credits. The rank and file were sure to rush in to get their own decorations, now that it could be presumed to be stylish.

**O**F THE leaders, the ancient philosopher, Shizar, proved to be the only notable exception, remaining in his

desert tower and keeping his own council. This would never do, as he was quite influential in his own sector, being quite the wisest Martian in that part of Mars.

He was sent for with a summons, and only then appeared, at first deporting himself civilly enough, and, so the Examiner thought, reconciled to his fate.

The Territorial Examiner and the Examiner's clerk at that time were working the southeast quarter of East Erythrium, and had set up their checking station in a remote rest dome about forty miles south of Yttrium City; and thus the only knowledge that Sergeant Miller and his superiors had of what occurred came about through the testimony of Koomar, the disciple, who had come along, as he said, "for the walk", and a very frightened Examiner's clerk, who limped into Yttrium City three days later, too spent to be as hysterical as he would have liked.

According to the clerk, the Examiner had approached Shizar with the standard questions. "Your name, age, occupation and address, please?"

"I am called Shizar, Thinker of East Erythrium. My age is two hundred and twelve migrations."

"Whew!" the clerk said. "Two hundred and twelve

years old!" He set about preparing the stencils at once, while his superior wrote out a check for four hundred credits, but prudently did not sign it.

"Please disrobe," he said.

"I do not understand," Shizar rumbled; "I thought that I was merely to be arrested."

"We don't want to arrest you. Just take off the bloomers."

"I am vastly sorry," Shizar said, "but I have explained by letter that I cannot do that. Perhaps you would consent to put the name on the outside of the bloomers?" (He called the garment a *shalum*, but that is the Martian of it.)

**T**HIS SHOULD have been the Examiner's cue to say "yes", but he was a zealot. He was hot, and wanted to get back to Yttrium City; crossly he ordered the clerk to assist him in removing Shizar's bloomers by force.

This was attested to by the clerk, and later by Koomar, who was waiting outside, and at that moment peeping through window. The venerable philosopher, at this point, had seemed to go completely berserk, either with rage or desperation. With a hiss as shrill and bloodcurdling as that of a charging bull glak, he had knocked the Exam-

er's clerk right through the door with a single fillip of his left tentacle, and then closed with the Examiner.

The clerk had seen no more than this, for he sprang up from his rear-bumper landing and fled straightway in the direction of Yttrium City.

(There was one curious feature about the bodies of Martians which the Examiner and his assistant had either forgotten, or overlooked. Martians—and especially High Martians—are generally pacifists; but there lingers, from some obscure prehistorical need, a three-foot-long, flexible stinger upon the base of every Martian's dorsal shell. It is a thousand times deadlier than that of the scorpion.)

And soon the Examiner lay silent, swollen and empurpled, alone in the rest dome upon the red desert, with his dead dreams and the unsigned check for four hundred credits still lying, untouched, upon the table...

**I**T HAD BEEN predicted that the fugitive would make straight for the mud flats that follow the frost in the high latitudes of the south, and estivate for the remainder of the dry season—burying himself ten feet deep in the primordial muck so that no one could find him until the frost crept back north in

the autumn, and he should feel like clawing his way to the surface once more. Any Martian can withdraw into his shell, until he is almost hermetically sealed from the elements, and sleep for years.

Sergeant Miller knew, however, that High Martians seldom estivate unless to keep from starving to death; and it had been his opinion that Shizar would simply go home first, and think out his next move there in philosophical leisure.

Therefore had he sought out Koomar, the Reluctant, and forced him to lead him to Shizar's ancestral tower upon the Mare Erythrium.

Now they had reached the shadows of the towers themselves, and their footsteps, in the dry canal, sounded strangely loud as they walked between the looming red battlements which flanked them, on either side.

"I do not like this," said Koomar, the Low Martian, for the fifteenth time since Sergeant Miller had sought him out in a Fifth Street *tsith* house in Yttrium City.

"Scared?" Miller said, with a crack-lipped sun-grin.

"Not of old Shizar; but when I lived in the *haumat* of Shizar, there were three others who lived there, too. Not Martians, but *homo sapiens*, and therefore of a vengeful

nature. Doubtless they will kill me for leading you here."

"Marsmen?" Sergeant Miller's faded blue eyes combed the silent, windowless columns with new wariness. "Why didn't you tell me before?"

"You did not ask me," Koomar said. "These are young ones, which Shizar, the old fool, rescued from the airless plateaus just to the east of here, several years ago. It was a mining camp, I believe, and the old ones were dead in the epidemic."

"YOU'RE LYING," Miller said, taking a drink from his canteen. No Earthman in his right mind would take in and raise three baby Martians. An infantile Martian is, if possible, even more disagreeable-looking than an adult Martian. And in addition, it hisses and whistles almost constantly. A human child must look just as repellant to a Martian—even a philosopher.

"It is true," Koomar said. "The three are like his own children, and I, as his disciple, was forced to wait upon them, tentacle and foot; and the smallest male pulled my ears and eyes shamefully at times, and the female made me bathe with water. As a matter of fact, there is Shizar's *haumat* just ahead. I think I

will turn around and go back to—ssshst!"

"Keep moving," Miller said grimly. "If this is a trap, you'll be the first to walk into it."

Now that the ugliness of Shizar's lair was before him, he was uncertain what to do. The canal-dwellers had moved south at this season, in search of the receding frost line, but in front of the *haumat* of Shizar was one of those most rare and valued items on Mars, an atomic force pump and a water tank. It must have cost Shizar ten years of his government allotment.

"That was the *she's* idea," Koomar grumbled. "Baths indeed!"

The girl must have Shizar wrapped around her finger, Miller thought. He hesitated a moment before the opening in the base of the *haumat*, then struck the hard-baked mud with the butt of his *zzt* rifle. This was standard Martian greeting, though the Martians did it with their horny feet. There was no door; only a heavy hanging of *glak* skin.

The hanging was abruptly drawn aside. A woman stood in the opening with the dying sunlight upon her brown face. She was small, and her long, straight hair was of blanchéd gold, like her eyebrows, giving a startling effect. Sergeant Miller took in the per-

fect features of her face and form, the skimpy rags she wore, and deep within him the male animal stirred, while his spinsterish subconscious whispered warning.

And abruptly he was telling himself that she was barrel-chested, the way all Martie men and women were. The only trouble was that on her it looked good.

"What do you want?" she said.

"Shizar," he answered, and started to push her aside.

A very earnest voice, just at his elbow, said "*I wouldn't do that.*"

**T**HERE WAS a rifle barrel in Sergeant Miller's ribs, and at such times he knew what to do. He dropped his own weapon and put his hands in the air. Then he turned very carefully to address his captor.

Captors, rather. There were two of them. The oldest Martie boy—the one the rifle—could not have been over fourteen years of age. The other boy was considerably younger. Both had washed gold hair, exactly like the girl's.

Koomar was sighing and hissing at a great rate about the foolishness of claspng vipers to one's bosom; but he kept a respectful distance from the girl, especially.

"Come on in," the girl said.

"Watch them, Shad. Junior, go get a bucket of water from the well. Our guests are thirsty."

"Very kind of you," Sergeant Miller said, and blinked to adjust his eyes to the gloom of the inner chamber as he followed her in. He still had his hands in the air.

"Sit down there on the floor," the girl said. "Keep your hands in plain sight." She turned to Koomar in sudden fury. "And you, you miserable traitor, wait outside. If I were Shizar I'd let *your* cold, snake's blood flow!"

**"SSHT!"** protested Koomar, frowning slightly with his tentacles, "*He* made me bring him here. It was not my fault. Should I have let them beat me, perhaps, before I consent? You know the police, Zeela!"

"Get out!" She stamped her foot. Koomar quickly shuffled to the door.

"Now then," the girl said. "If you still want to see Shizar, perhaps it can be arranged. As a matter of fact he wants to talk to you, to try to reason with the police."

Sergeant Miller did not answer. He just looked at her with wintry eyes that boded violence should the Martie raggamuffin ever relax his grip upon the rifle for a moment.

And then, from the darkness of the room behind the girl, Zeela, a monstrous shape emerged into the comparative light of the chamber. A tall, dignified figure in billowing dark garments, whose compound eyes, glistening benignly, sought out in silence the alien there before he spoke.

"I have been expecting you," said the philosopher, Shizar.

**SERGEANT** Miller said sourly "I can see that, I've already met your reception committee."

"Ah, that! My Earth-children were impetuous, I'm afraid; this was not my idea."

"That's right," the girl said. "He wanted to give up when he saw you coming."

"We won't let you take him," Shad said. "Never! Will we, Zeela?"

"No dear."

"We could shoot him," said Junior, who had come back with the water and set it down beside Sergeant Miller, who drank without a word of thanks.

"Violence begets violence," said Shizar, sententiously.

All in all, they were the nuttiest bunch that Sergeant Miller had ever seen. Yet it would be best to keep an even temper and not, consequently, lose his head. Marties are no-

toriously good shots with zzt rifles.

They had been about to eat the evening meal of *glak* stew, and Shizar insisted that the prisoner be allowed to partake. Sergeant Miller ate unquestioningly. He had lived on this desert long enough to know to take food when he could get it.

Koomar kept putting his head in the door from time to time, and once the girl threw a large bone at him, which he retrieved from the sand and gnawed.

With a full belly, Sergeant miller was beginning to think again, and to ponder the relationship between Shizar and the villainously unpleasant Koomar.

When they had eaten—and not until—Shizar spoke once more. "I have decided, my children," he said. "I shall go back with the Earthling, but only conditionally."

"I can make no conditions," Sergeant Miller Said. "You're all under arrest. You can't get away with this, you know."

"Ah, that was the condition!" said Shizar sadly. "That you make no trouble for these innocents here. I should not have minded a few years in prison—even the ultimate humiliation of—"

"The penalty for murder is more than a few years in prison," Sergeant Miller said.



"Murder?" exclaimed Zeela the color slowly draining from her face.

"Murder?" exclaimed Zeela, gently. "Whom?"

**YOU WOULD** have thought, from their tones, that they had never heard of such a thing.

"I am referring to the Territorial Census Examiner," Sergeant Miller said grimly. "Or had you forgotten?"

Shizar was silent for a long time. "We struggled," he said at last, in a bemused voice. "But I had no idea—I must have lost my head. I really must have lost my head."

"I don't believe it!" Zeela said. "Not for one minute. Shizar couldn't do a thing like that. He's kind and gentle. He took my brothers and I and cared for us when our parents died, and—" She broke down into distressful sobbing which practically demoralized Sergeant Miller's last reserves of self-control.

The smallest boy Junior, looked bewildered and frightened. The elder, Shad, though he still trained the rifle upon Sergeant Miller, seemed to waver.

Shizar the philosopher was solemnly nodding his great, ophidian head. "A life for a life," he rumbled "It is a just and necessary rule of our

society. The debt shall be paid, Earthling. Rest tonight, and in the morning we shall start back."

**MILLER** caught a glimpse of Koomar's head, as it peered around the edge of the door. Doubtless Koomar would have sneaked away long ago, except that it was now quite dark and Low Martians are convinced that evil spirits prowl the barren mares at night. Also, there was something else bothering Koomar; some immense agitation. He wished that he knew what it was, and for the second time wondered why the philosopher had tolerated such a one in his household for all these months.

Zeela was in whispered consultation with Shizar. The Martian, after a moment, nodded gravely, and withdrew once more through the wide curtained opening at the back of the chamber.

The girl came over and sat down, cross legged opposite Miller. "That's Shizar's meditation cell," she said. "He sleeps there. I suggest you do the same, Sergeant, because we intend to see that you don't move from this spot until daylight. Shizar must think over his decision."

The conflicting evidence that his prisoner had just now acknowledged surrender; the

undeniable fact that he, himself, was a prisoner; and the mystery of old Shizar's apparent surprise that the multiple insertion of his dorsal stinger would kill an Earthman—all these were making Sergeant Miller a little dizzy and he decided that he did, indeed, need sleep, but now was hardly the time for it.

Also there was one other thing which he had noted a moment ago that had sent his mind back to sift over the facts of the murder once more, a small, but important item which did not fit.

As Shizar had disappeared into his meditation cell, Sergeant Miller had noted a very curious fact. The *shalum*, the ceremonial bloomers, had been ripped on the back, almost from top to bottom, and sewn together again in the clumsy Martian style.

How does a man, stung thirteen times with deadly neurotoxic barbs, manage to reach out and rip the back out of his fleeing assailant's bloomers?

**T**HE GIRL said, "You'll be starting back to Marso-polis in the morning." The smaller boy was asleep, with his pale head in her lap; she looked very tired, and rather older than she was. Enough

so that Sergeant Miller could feel some small twinge of something which he called pity for her unenviable plight, and that of her little brothers. It was not pity, of course, but it would have scandalized him, at that moment, had he analyzed the feeling. He knew, because he had been told, that Martie women, like Low Martians, are treacherous, unprincipled, and immoral.

"None too soon," he said.

"You hate Mars?"

The older boy, Shad, was nodding slightly over his rifle...

"It is not fit for habitation," Miller said fervently, and a moment later was sorry, for the hurt that had come in her eyes. He did not understand how a woman can be vibrant and defiant one moment, beaten and suppliant the next.

"You should see the desert in the spring. It blooms. It's beautiful."

He told her that he had lived on Mars for ten years. He did not say, however, that he intended to make this his last. She talked of small things, of their hard life in the desert, of the wonders of Marsopolis which she had never seen—the magnificence of the cities of Earth were beyond even her imagination.

Of Koomar; and this was of special interest to Sergeant Miller. For some reason she was forcing conversation.

Koomar had come to live with Shizar a little over two years ago, she said. Shizar fed him, and even gave him sums of money. He was no Low Martian relative, but he seemed to have some kind of hold on Shizar. Zeela hinted that it might be blackmail. An intriguing idea, for it fitted in with some ideas that were a-boring in Sergeant Miller's mind. If only he had the final pieces of the puzzle...

Finally she slept, and there was no sound save the whaoping snoor of Koomar, outside the door. The older boy, too, along toward dawn, rested his head on his knees and slept.

**IT WAS** very quiet. Too quiet. He knew this instinctively. They had all fallen asleep too easy. It was as if they had forgotten their benefactor, as if—and he suddenly had the answer!

And very stealthily, like a lean, brown cat, he stalked the sleeping boy.

Shad jumped up with a cry, but he had already lost his rifle. The girl sat up, took in the situation, but did not seem duly upset. She smiled a little. "You're too late," she said.

Sergeant Miller strode to

the door of Shizar's meditation cell and drew aside the hangings. The room was flooded with early morning light from a low window, where chintz curtains in the fresh morning breeze of the new air sweeping up from cracks and fissures all over the mare.

Of Shizar there was no sign. The bird had flown.

The last of the pieces was in Sergeant Miller's hands at last. He knew that, staring at the fenestration. Martian edifices never have windows but he should have remembered that a woman—even a Martie—would insist upon windows. It was roughly three feet square, and cut out of the solid masonry with a beta torch.

The tracks of the fugitive were plainly headed directly south, which puzzled Miller, in that all other things but this were neatly drawn in his precise, policeman's brain now.

The girl, Zeela, admitted culpability, but she was unrepentant. Last night she had suggested that Shizar flee to the mud flats, which lay a day's march to the south. That had been their whispered conversation.

"And he agreed?" said Sergeant Miller thoughtfully.

"Of course."

He didn't want to say what

he thought, just yet; it might be too late already. At any rate he must hurry, and he couldn't leave Zeela and her brothers here—either with the devious Koomar, or without him. On the pretense of arrest he must take them along, and leave them in the care of the authorities.

The nearest patrol station was twenty miles to the southwest, but a private mining reserve lay south, in the direction of Shizar's flight. They would head for there.

**ORDINARILY**, Sergeant Miller would have made it by eleven o'clock, but burdened by the Marties and by the slow-walking Koomar, who groaned and hissed every step of the way, the airless heat blasts of mid-day caught them on the mare, and they had to lie prone upon the sand over a vent crack in the mare, with the reflectosheet, which was standard equipment for travelers on Mars, over them.

And Sergeant Miller found a strange wonder build inside of him once, as he lay against Zeela under the shield, at the softness of her. He had forgotten such things, and had to rediscover it...

They reached the settlement at dusk, just when the miners were coming up from the chromium mines and set-

ting about the business of getting drunk and brawlsome.

Some of them pointed at Zeela, and one young man in a tin helmet whistled. A grizzled old miner said, "You wouldn't whistle at that, would you, Joe. That's a Mars woman. A genuine Martie."

"No kidding?" Joe said, and he staggered along behind Zeela, and tore her dress. It cost him four teeth.

The old man was angry. Joe had not meant any harm. "You hadn't ought to done that to Joe, Sergeant," he said. "You got no authority here. This is a private reserve."

"One more crack," Sergeant Miller said, "and you'll see." He was shaking all over with rage. Not at the miner, but at himself. Wherever you brought Marties there was bound to be trouble, and he couldn't wait to be rid of these three.

**MR. PAUKER**, the mining superintendent, was a plump man with a neatly-trimmed mustache and rather hard eyes. He occupied an air-conditioned dome; the only one in the camp.

Sergeant Miller was not welcome, and Mr. Pauker smiled at him with his lips only, as he refused to lend him either assistance or one of his

trucks for the pursuit of Shizar.

"You can't drive on the mud flats," he said. "If a truck breaks through I lose it. Besides, we deal with Martians a lot here, and we have to keep on the good side of the High Martians, whose territorial land grants often overlap our mining rights. I'd appreciate it if you kept going, Sergeant, until you're out of our reserve."

"I've a woman and two children along," Sergeant Miller said, fighting to control his temper, because he didn't have time for that. "I'd like to leave them here until arrangements can be made for them."

Mr. Pauker let his eyes caress the bronzed figure of Zeela as she stood outside the window with Koomar and her brothers.

"No folks?" he said.

"Not if I am too late," Miller said. And wondered why he had said that.

"Well," said Mr. Pauker, "ordinarily we don't let Marties light in this camp; the boys are pretty rough on them. She can stay, but I won't be responsible."

He had to be satisfied with that answer. There was no time to lose. It was already getting dark,\* and Shizar would be somewhere out on the mudflats already—or under them. Shizar was very old

and slow. Pray that he was slow enough!

Sergeant Miller went out and got Koomar to come with him. Koomar did not want to, but he was afraid to protest after the tone of authority which was used upon him.

It took them a while to find the splay tracks, but once they did, the Earthman set a pace which left Koomar wheezing to keep up. It was two hours before they caught up with Shizar.

**T**HE MUDFLATS of Mars, like the Martians, and all native living things, migrate with the seasons, but in general they occupy the regions between the fortieth and fiftieth parallels, both north and south of the equator.

They are, for purposes of navigation, impassable, bottomless bogs, covered along the northern rim by a sun-baked crust of mud which gradually thins into open quicksand.

Shizar, the philosopher, walked upon this treacherous crust, which had begun, just a few minutes ago, to sway slightly under his heavy tread, and was sick at heart. For it was not ending as he had wished; he, himself, had not acted according to the tenets of his own ethics in escaping the police, and there was no joy, now that victory lay in

his grasp—in the next hundred yards perhaps. Yet he was resolute, and he had lived too long to be afraid. The night was a comforting mantle of obscurity about him, the grateful fragrance of the *psilla* flowers, which grow only in still, remote parts of the bogs of Mars, were in his nostrils, assuring him of his aloneness.

Then, abruptly, someone, from behind him in the gloom, called his name...

SHIZAR TURNED to face Sergeant Miller. The crust of the bog was now quivering like jelly, sagging under his weight. "Go back," he said. "This will not sustain the weight of both of us. You will perish."

"So will you," Sergeant Miller said. His voice was weary, as one who has walked too many miles in a day.

"What do you mean?" said Shizar, with a cold feeling at his heart. "I only estimate. I shall sink down a few feet below the surface and find my level, but you will sink forever."

"So will you," said Sergeant Miller again. "I know your secret, philosopher; *you haven't got any shell.*"

Shizar drew his ceremonial bloomers very tightly about his vast throat with his ten-

tacles and stood very quietly for five minutes. "How did you find out?" he said. "He would not have told you."

"Koomar? No, Koomar didn't want the world to know of your deformity any more than you did. But somehow he found out about you several years ago, and saw at once that he had a good thing. That by threat of exposure he could force you to take him into your *haumat* and feed him for the rest of his life. No Low Martian could ask more."

"Then it is common knowledge," said Shizar, and felt quite ill.

"NOT AT ALL. You see, when I learned about your philanthropic act in taking in the Martie orphans, I got to thinking. Martians have nothing in common, physically, with Terrans. Yet freaks and outcasts have a brotherhood of their own, Shizar. And that set me to wondering. When you escaped through that three-foot-square window last night I knew."

"You knew?" said Shizar numbly.

"That your bloomers hid a deformity. Any adult Martian's dorsal shell is at least five feet at its narrowest diameter. And that if you had no shell, neither could you have a stinger. Therefore you

could not have stung the Territorial Examiner to death."

Shizar was full of wonder.

"Then who—?"

For answer, Sergeant Miller turned and pointed to a shapeless blob that crouched far back at the rim of the quaking bog on which they stood, a vast shadow that might have been a *surve* lish, but was not.

Koomar still waited for them.

**SERGEANT MILLER** had decided that it would be wisest to strike out at once for the patrol station, rather than go back to the inhospitable mining camp, and so, with his prisoner marching ahead of him, he strode west along the edge of the mudflats with leaden feet and half-frozen ears, despite his heating pack.

It was almost midnight.

Koomar, who felt no pain, was talkative. "I shall plead *nolo contendere*," Koomar said. He had a fine working knowledge of the law, having been involved with it a dozen times in the past. "That way I shall probably get off with an easy sentence, as they are always afraid of being reversed by the Earth courts here on Mars. Of course, to you I admit that I am guilty. It was not really my fault, however.

"When the Earthling struggled with my dear old patron, Shizar, and ripped his *shalum*,

I knew that I would have to do something. You see, he had learned of Shizar's nakedness, and I could not afford to share that secret. Had it become public, Shizar would have kicked me out at once. I should no longer have had a claim upon him. It was not my fault, do you think, Earthman?"

But Sergeant Miller was scarcely listening. He was thinking that he would just be able to make it to the patrol station by morning. From there he could barely get to Marsopolis in time to catch the ship to Earth, and turn his back on the sere, red planet forever and ever.

Shizar had gone back to his *haumat* on the Mare Erythrium. The Martie girl, Zeela, and her brothers were, presumably, still in the mining camp.

The boys would make out all right. They were hardened little desert rats who could take care of themselves. As for Zeela, the miners would probably give her a hard time. He could not help remembering how the one had torn the dress from her brown shoulder.

Of course, Mr. Pauker, the mining superintendent, would be there to "protect" her. He recalled the look in Mr. Pauker's eyes.

But what the hell! Marties

were born for trouble, and it was no concern of his. At least, he, Sergeant Miller, was rid of them, and good riddance. He was going home.

Let them paw her; let—

"We are turning around," said Koomar suddenly. "We are going in the wrong direc-

tion. We are walking toward the mining camp, not the patrol station. I would not mention it except that I do not care to walk in circles all night. I—*sh-ssst!*"

Sergeant Miller had got his man again.



## READIN' and WRITHIN'

Book Reviews by Damon Knight

**T**HE SPACE FRONTIERS, by Roger Lee Vernon. Signet, 25¢.

This volume is unique in several ways. First, it's an original paperback, published by a company we had learned to regard as a die-hard reprint house. Second, it is the work of a man who has never before published any science-fiction anywhere; Signet identifies him as a high-school teacher who enjoys writing (fair warning!); nor is it a first novel, which would be common enough, but a first book of

short stories. Third, it is the work of a man who, to all appearance, has not so much as *read* any science fiction for the last twenty years.

The first thing that strikes you about these stories is the astonishing archaism of their style; for ignorance, for awkwardness, and for sophomoric enthusiasm, several of them are the very spit of a 1930 pulp epic.

"Battle," for instance, is a slam-bang chunk out of an altogether incredible future war—in which the



airborne hero, cruising at 6,000 MPH, slaughters the enemy by batallions in the air and on the ground (sighting on them by means of "a viso-screen with adjustable knobs"); escapes the frightful "Oscar beams" by "zigzagging... contrary to their wavelength"; and finally gets shot down, in one piece but completely covered with debris, reflecting philosophically that "There had always been battles and there would, perhaps, always be."

"Incident In Space" takes place in an area muzzily identified by the author as "the Outer Orbits," and is full of violently enthusiastic detail about spaceships. For instance: "In the early days numerous ships had been torn into ribbons by meteorites. Ships would fly into a bed of the rapidly moving objects and be filled with holes. (Noble phrase!) Now the gravitation locator solved all such problems... This device spotted and accurately charted the course of every particle... when the object was still about three minutes away."

Farther on, we are told, "The fastest the earth ship could travel was L7, seven times the speed of light." And a little later, after an encounter with an alien ship, a character remarks, "'No. They're gone. If they're over eight thousand miles out we couldn't see them with anything.'"

Gaw!

For the record, a ship moving at "L7, seven times the speed of light," would travel 8,000 miles,

not in three minutes, but in about *six thousandths* of a second.

Whatever Vernon teaches, it can't be mathematics...

"Xenophobia" is a good deal better: it deals conventionally but competently with the problem of a future society which has split up into tiny, mutually antagonistic family groups. Overlong, and spotted with the bruises Vernon leaves on the English language (e. g., "a round circular-like thing"), the story nevertheless has something to say.

"The City and the Ship" is another muddled space-opera (containing a planet which on one page has an impossible atmosphere 6,000 miles deep, and eight pages later has another, equally impossible, "just inches from the surface"). In about twice the necessary length, it deals with the familiar theme of the robot civilization after its creators are dead.

"The Chess Civilization" is a sprightly satire, about a world whose dominant passion is chess. Except for the embarrassing 1930 pseudo-science Vernon has put into the mouth of his inventor, this story is readable and good fun.

"The Plant World," as full of Vernonyms as any of the rest ("So unafraid of the presence of danger as to be foolhardy"), is an intriguing vanVogtish treatment of the planetary intelligence theme. The story's logic is badly marred by the world-girdling plant's ambition to copy the Earth spaceship and so carry unbroken tendrils of itself to

other planets: if Vernon's plant-thing doesn't know this is impossible, his spacemen ought to; but the denouement is satisfactorily ingenious and sensible.

In "The Stop Watch," Vernon takes H. G. Wells' classic "The New Accelerator" and waters it down into an adolescent fantasy. "Population Crisis: 2550" can only be discussed as a tract; as such, it's unnecessarily gloomy.

"The Death Seekers," the final story, though well scarred by Vernon's awkwardness, is not easy to dismiss. Vernon has here taken the problem of the benevolent tyranny of robots, only sketchily examined in Jack Williamson's "The Humanoids," and developed it in fine, moody detail. Along with his 1930 faults, Vernon has this 1930 virtue: his stories are concerned with the great unsolved problems that perplex and delight us, rather than with extensions of the trivia that keep us earthbound.

What bothers me about this volume, in its occasional goodness equally as well as its overwhelming badness, is the feeling it gives me of having lost two decades somewhere. Granted, modern science fiction lacks some of the sincerity and inner meaning it once had; but to recapture that, is it really necessary to go back to kindergarten?

Again, this book is not so bad if you only take the space-opera out of it: but Signet appears to think that the space-opera is what makes it worth having: title, cover design and blurbs all support this idea.

What I am afraid of is that Signet may be right. This kind of ignorant nonsense ought to be well adapted to the already-existing mental set of a reader to whom "space," "planets," "galaxies," are all words without any specific meaning, conveying nothing but a vague feeling of "out there." If so—if there is a vast untapped audience of unsophisticated (and uneducated) science-fiction readers just waiting to be fed—then we may expect to see an immediate mushroom-growth of Vernons...out of whom, in another 20 years, a little coterie of polished science fiction writers will evolve, to sit and wonder why their stuff doesn't sell.

What a nightmare! Thank heaven I don't believe it for a moment!

**A**NOTHER KIND, by Chad Oliver. Ballantine, 35¢.

While surprises like this one happen, there's still hope for science fiction. Here are six distinguished short stories (and one dud) by the author of "Shadows In the Sun."

Chad Oliver is that rare bird, a trained scientist who writes readable fiction about his own specialty. "John Taine," a mathematician, wrote most often about biochemistry; Isaac Asimov, a biochemist, prefers psychology and sociology. But Oliver, a graduate anthropologist, is building up our field's most fascinating and comprehensive collection of anthropological science fiction.

[Turn To Page 116]

## NOVELET

*This world looked just like the Earth he knew; and here were places and people he knew — but all was just different enough to make Harrington feel like a stranger. And this, he knew, was just what the doctor ordered. Then came the question — was there also a different Neal Harrington here?*

# THE VACATIONER

by SAM MERWIN, Jr.

*illustrated by ORBAN*

**D**R. JENNER twirled his spectacles and said, "Neal, what you need is to get off by yourself for a while. You've got to step outside and get your breath, regain a proper perspective. Frankly, my advice is a trip, a long trip. Otherwise..." He raised an eyebrow, left the conclusion unsaid.

Neal Harrington tried to take a deep breath—and couldn't. The tautness within him sprung a catch in his diaphragm, forcing him to exhale before he was ready. He thought, ruefully, *I can't even relax here!*

He said, "It's not that easy, Joe; there isn't a place I'd enjoy visiting where I could

get away from anything very long."

Dr. Jenner looked thoughtful, said, "I thought you weren't disturbed about your wife and Harvey Bolling."

Harrington's laugh was sharp and mirthless. He said, "It's not that, Joe. We're all adults—I hope—and Marcia's old enough to know her own mind. My problem is—and I'm being realistic, not conceited—that too damned many people know me. Mostly, you can thank Marcia's father for that. He's always got a belt out of having a character like me for a son-in-law. Compensation, I guess you'd call it."

"I'm fully aware of this facet of your problem," Dr.



Jenner told him drily. "And, I think, it can be managed."

"No North Woods or two-bit islands," said Harrington; "I hate fish and mosquitoes."

"I believe we can get you away from those, too," said Dr. Jenner. "Mind you, it will be expensive therapy."

Harrington shrugged. "Money, I have," he replied. "You know that. Short of millionaire dough, of course. I can manage anything reasonably unreasonable—even your fees." He paused, frowned. "But I don't like the idea of running away. After all—"

"After all," Dr. Jenner interrupted, "haven't you been running away ever since you got out of the Air Force? We've been all over that. The therapy you need desperately is detachment, a proper set of scales on which to weigh your personal problems."

"I don't think I could stand being alone," said Harrington with a shudder. "You know, Joe—quaff and the world quaffs with you. Swear off and you drink alone. Not that alcohol's a problem."

"Where I'm about to propose sending you, you won't be alone," Dr. Jenner promised.

"Then how the hell..." Harrington began. He halted, looked at Dr. Jenner reproachfully, added, "Hey, I'm no good at languages."

"They'll speak English," the doctor told him.

"I don't get it," said Harrington, puzzled. "If they speak English, and can read, I'll lay you odds, within forty-eight hours, some pot-bellied so-and-so will move in and say, 'Neal Harrington! I saw you throw that pass against Notre Dame.' Or, 'Hey, Harrington, how many planes *did* you shoot down?' I'm telling you again, Joe, like it or not, I'm a celebrity. Probably the most useless, stupid excuse for a celebrity alive. But I'm stuck with it."

"Where I propose to send you," Dr. Jenner said quietly, "no one will know you—or, if they do, it won't be you."

"I don't get it, Joe," Harrington repeated. "It must be some place out of this world."

"Not out of it exactly," replied Dr. Jenner. "but certainly *off* this one. Before I tell you, I must insist on swearing you to absolute secrecy. Not that I doubt you, but..."

**J**UST seventy-two hours later, Neal Harrington sat by himself in a small, rather plush waiting-room. Perhaps because his luggage had been weighed and checked and taken away from him, his surroundings reminded him rather of the airlines terminal on Forty-second Street. There was a long counter in front of the rear wall, behind which a quiet looking male clerk and two trim young females worked at their assigned tasks with quiet efficiency.

He wondered how many times, in the past eight years, he had passed this inconspicuously tasteful Park Avenue building. He had been familiar for years with the bright displays in the florist's shop on one side of it, with the towering hotel on its other. Yet, somehow, his eyes had failed to note, his memory had failed to retain, the grey

stone and chrome entrance with the legend *Outouriste* above it in raised, slanting letters.

His first reaction, when Joe Jenner told him that he could—upon payment of \$10,000 and taking certain apparently simple tests—travel to a world which was, in all its main respects, a parallel to the Earth he knew, had been sheer and total disbelief. Yet, Dr. Jenner, serious, was not a man to be discredited; and Dr. Jenner had, beyond question, been serious.

"Its very incredibility has been its best protection, Neal," Dr. Jenner had told him. "Actually, a practical means of passage between these two planets was discovered by an involuntary genius in the research department of one of our major distilleries. They were seeking a quick-aging process through radioactives, and their sample batches kept disappearing—vats and all—when they applied a certain power combination. This genius turned the power on himself—and found the whiskey. Or, rather, the vats. Luckily, when he got back, he went directly to his boss, and he was a man of wisdom and imagination. This was about a dozen years ago. Since then, *Outouriste* has been operating,

very discreetly, on a very limited scale."

"But what about the Government?" Harrington had wanted to know.

"They know about it—a very few, very highly placed, very responsible men. It's the same on the other side." He paused, added, "Sooner or later, it will be opened up. But the transfer process is so damned costly..."

"You're telling me!" Harrington had exclaimed. Then, "Isn't it dangerous? I mean, radioactives..."

"In the sense that no one knows exactly the forces we're dealing with, it has elements of danger." Dr. Jenner had smiled. "But don't worry, Neal—we haven't lost a passenger yet, as far as we know."

"What does that mean—'as far as we know?'"

"Some of our clients," Dr. Jenner had told him, "choose to get permanently lost. Make a better adjustment, perhaps."

So here he sat, Neal Harrington awaiting the summons that would transport him to—what? He fumbled in his watch pocket for the little silveroid disc that was his two-way ticket, pulled it out, looked at it briefly. It looked like a silveroid disc, weighed less than a coin of the same half-dollar size. Yet, from what he had been told, it con-

tained a radioactive record of his own cell patterns and brain waves which, under proper conditions, would trip the key of the gate.

A name was called from the counter, a name familiar to Harrington. A man who had come in later than he rose from a seat and came forward past him. He was a plump, pink-jowled, middle-aged man with slightly bulging blue eyes and a small, difficult mouth. His name was Norris Paul, and he was a wealthy investment broker whose firm dealt frequently with the bank Harrington's father-in-law owned.

His eyes met Harrington's as he moved past and, involuntarily, Harrington said, "Hello, Norry."

The middle-aged man blinked, muttered a hello, went on past to the desk. After a brief, whispered consultation with one of the female clerks, he disappeared through a door on the left.

Harrington wondered what the hell. He had not been told he wasn't to speak to friends—only to be careful. Surely, Norry Paul knew him well enough to return a civil greeting. Or—and Harrington recalled the puzzled look in the bulging blue eyes—*did* he know him? A sudden chill crept up Harrington's spine as

it occurred to him that this might not have been the Norris Paul he knew—or who knew him. This might be a Norry Paul from over there.

If there really was such a place. Harrington shivered, then jumped as the male clerk called his name and beckoned.

"If you'll just step through," the clerk informed him, nodding to a door on the right, "we'll have you cleared in a jiffy."

**SOMEHOW**, the word "jiffy" sounded hideously quaint. Sudden panic clutched at his diaphragm and throat, turned the backs of his knees to apple tapioca. Every brain cell, every nerve, every muscle, urged him to turn around and walk back to the normalcy of Park Avenue outside, shimmering in its summer heat. He could go to the Berkshires for a week, patch things up with Marcia, get going again...

A tiny woman, lovely and cool as a soap carving, emerged from the door, adjusting a diamond-and-emerald clip at the throat of her simple, superbly smart black silk dress. Harrington recognized her, vaguely, as a Hollywood actress who, according to the columnists, had been recuperating from a nervous collapse following her fifth

divorce. She looked rested, relaxed, even wore the hint of a smile suggesting recently—remembered pleasures on her generous, meaningless mouth. She passed Harrington as if he weren't there.

He thought—*Neal Harrington, hero!*

He took a deep breath—and made it this time—and pushed on through the door. He found himself in a small grey room without windows, where a bald-headed man in a doctor's white jacket—why, Harrington wondered, not for the first time, did doctors and butchers wear such similar uniforms?—checked his disc under an ominous looking apparatus covered with pebbled black metal sheathing, then said, with a smile, "If you'll just go straight ahead, Mr. Carrington... And, whatever you do, don't lose your disc. Remember, it's your return ticket. And watch your money; since passage is entirely unofficial, it is almost impossible to arrange a loan from the other side."

Harrington nodded. He tried another deep breath as he moved toward the curtained doorway at the far end of the grey room, this time felt the familiar catch in his diaphragm. Then he thought of Norris Paul and of the Hollywood actress who had just emerged so blithely the other

way—and took the necessary three strides.

He pushed the curtain aside, found himself in an oddly vacant sort of dark closet, hesitated, fought down panic, kept going—and emerged in a room that might have been the counterpart of the one he had just left, save that its walls were pale green, its white-coated attendant wearing thick red hair, peppered with grey.

"...all in order," this man concluded, after running Harrington's disc under a machine that appeared to be the twin of that on the other side of the closet. "You'll find your luggage waiting outside. I advise you to make your reservations before you leave us—a proper itinerary makes adjustment easier. Also, if you care to bank any money..."

WITH A long, cool glass of Rhine wine and seltzer lording it over the ashtray on the iron table at his elbow, Harrington sat on the terrace porch of the *Evergreen Club* in the Berkshires and watched Mark Lane and Harvey Bolling and Lane's daughter, Marcia, play a three-cornered game on the putting green just below. Beyond the putting green lay the tennis courts, beyond and on either side of the courts, the emerald



expanse of the golf course extended toward the familiar fired hills that surrounded the Club.

There were differences, albeit slight ones, between this *Evergreen Club* and the *Evergreen Club* that had, for more than a decade, been a regular summer vacation stop in his yearly routine. The tees had been lengthened; some of the traps had been shifted; the dining room and room service in the clubhouse were better; some of the pictures were unfamiliar. Otherwise, it might have been the same.

There was just one major difference. Neal Harrington was not down there, playing a putting game with his wife, his father-in-law and Harvey Bolling. As far as he had been able to discover in six days, Neal Harrington didn't exist at all in this world—his counterpart, opposite number, alter ego or call it what you would.

He watched walnut-brown, walnut-wrinkled little Mark Lane lay a careful stymie, preventing Harvey Bolling from shooting directly for the fifteenth cup. At the moment, Bolling was leading, and the older man's eyes gleamed their triumph. The shot meant Lane would not win, while Lane's daughter would if she sank her putt. That was his father-in-law,

Harrington thought wily—chopping down the competition until he had a clear path to victory, himself. And damn the consequences to anyone else.

Harrington noted something else. On this world, Mark Lane did not like Harvey Bolling. There was no mistaking the vindictiveness lurking behind his near-passive expression as he contemplated the spot in which he had placed the younger man. And, for this dislike, Harrington gave his father-in-law credit.

Back at the university—the university on Harrington's own world—Harvey Bolling had not been called the Boll Weevil for nothing. At first openly, when he was nothing, later behind his back when, through connivance and campus politics, he had gained power.

Harrington relished the oil of sportsmanship with which Bolling said, "Mean shot, Mark—you really make it tough for a fellow." Ultimately, he knew, not even Mark Lane could make things tough enough for the Boll Weevil. He was more like a serpent than an insect, a clever serpent who could retreat or appear to be basking peacefully while biding his time for the unsuspected strike. A garter-

snake with the fangs and poison of a cobra.

He tried to spin his shot around the stymie—stymies, in this world as in Harrington's own, were legal on the putting course if not on the real one—almost made it but ringed the cup. He said, "Drat!" and twisted his wide, thin mouth into a smile at Marcia. For here, as on Harrington's own world, he was after the millionaire's daughter.

**L**OOKING at her, Harrington found himself wondering why the Boll Weevil hadn't scored. For here, Marcia Lane, at thirty-one, was unmarried. There was no Neal Harrington to stand in Bolling's way. But, watching the familiar cant of Marcia's flannel skirt as she bent over to make her putt, seeing the uncertain sidelong look she fluttered at her father, he thought he understood.

With no Neal Harrington to sweep her into early marriage on a wave of glory following his double-threat, much-publicized heroism in both football and war, her father-fixation was even stronger in this incarnation. And, with no Neal Harrington in the family to shed an aura of athletic, military glory in whose reflected light he could glow, Lane had clamped even more

possessively on the remarkably beautiful daughter with which his late wife had blessed him.

For Mark Lane, despite the power and money he had inherited and enlarged, had nothing he truly wanted. Physically puny, reared in near-seclusion by governesses and private tutors, the millionaire distrusted such popularity as he had been able to attain—and therefore had attained little.

Seeing him, from his new detachment, Harrington felt sorry for him, felt almost ashamed for the dislike he had allowed himself to foster toward his father-in-law in recent years. He felt sorry for Marcia, who had sought release from paternal emotional fetters in the young airman athlete, only to find him another of her father's toys.

But he felt no compassion for Harvey Bolling, the creature who had eyes only for himself, for his own chances.

Surprisingly, thanks to her father's sabotaging of Bolling, Marcia won the game. She glanced up at the porch, brushing pale brown hair back from her forehead with a too-familiar gesture, saw Harrington sitting there and smiled at him with a sudden, shy warmth that reminded him heart-wrenchingly of the younger other Marcia he had

married. They had met, casually but pleasantly, during his six days at the club. He wondered what it would be like to hold her, to make love to her. Would it be a sullenly matter-of-fact violation, as it had become of recent years, or would it be the joyous union it had once been? He lifted a hand and waved and said, "Hello, *champ!*"

She blushed and turned away uncertainly to disappear under the brow of the porch into the ladies' locker room beneath. The men moved the other way, toward their own locker room, and he heard Bolling's voice, saying, "... have to take my word for it on the new Colombian Oil issue. If you use the rediscount rates, M. K...."

Harrington grinned to himself. So Bolling was trying the same game in this world. With no Neal Harrington to put snags, however feeble, in his way, Mark Lane stood to lose a small mint. He wondered if Lane were smart enough to stand the pressure, decided he was.

"Imbibing the scenery?" a hoarsely attractive feminine voice asked him. Before he could rise, Helene Wilson dropped into the chair on the other side of the table. She was a tall, rangy, dark-haired woman, apparently in her middle thirties, who exuded

sex, worldliness and something else Harrington found disturbing. Looking beneath the laughter in her light brown eyes, he decided it was strain.

He said, "Cut yourself a drink," signaled one of the black-jacketed waiters, hovering nearby. She ordered a gin and tonic, said, "I don't see how you can endure that dishwasher, Neal."

He made a face at his glass, said, "Well, it keeps me seasonably sober. And I came here for a rest, not a hang-over."

HE HAD noticed her the evening of his arrival, been introduced to her by the club professional the following afternoon. She played, he was informed and found to be true, a near-championship game of golf. She had also been, he was informed at various times by the lady in question, a good skier, a professional motorboat racer, a movie actress (briefly) and (more briefly still) married twice. She played sharpshooting bridge and samba, drank like a fish and appeared to be on at least friendly terms with most of the males, eligible and ineligible, around the club. She was, she admitted frankly, on the prowl for a third husband. Though, to judge by her behavior and

some of her other remarks, marriage was not absolutely essential in her scheme of living.

She sipped her gin and said, "Got your eye on the Lane girl, haven't you? Don't deny it—I was watching."

"Probably a spy," said Harrington.

"If you mean me, I couldn't keep my big mouth shut long enough to be a spy," she said, wrinkling her nose and eyes attractively. "If you mean, Marcia Lane, daddy wouldn't let her."

"I meant you—but skip it," Harrington told her. "You got your eye on me now?"

She laughed. "I've had my eye on you ever since you walked in last week," she said candidly. "You're a large lot of man, Neal. I'd hate to think of it going to waste."

"On, say, Marcia Lane—or anyone else except you," he offered.

She said, mocking him, "I'll bet it can cook, too—I'll bet it goes like crazy in a chef's hat over a backyard barbecue."

He said, "Not guilty." Yet, he wondered how she had speared this secret ambition so neatly. Barbecue pits simply weren't in the scheme of things included in his life with Marcia—on the other world, he remembered just in time. Outside of her blatant

sexiness, this quality of Helen Wilson's disturbed him most, this ability to pierce the cellophane wrapped thickly about his innermost wishes. Or was "disturbed" exactly the word he wanted? He wondered.

She said, "Well, you could if you set your mind to it."

"Perhaps," he told her.

"Hey! Why so gloomy?" she asked him. "Have dinner with me tonight. There's a hell of a roadhouse beyond Lennox—the *Chimney Pot*. It might be fun to drive there. I'm getting fed up with the same old face around here—and the same old passes too."

"Sounds swell," said Harrington, who had yet to stir from the club and its environs since his arrival.

**S**HE HANDLED her racy little foreign sports car expertly, as he had somehow known she would. And, though he was usually tense when not at the wheel himself, he was able to relax as she tooled them over the magnificent mountain roads. He wondered what the this-world version of the *Chimney Pot* would be like; in his own world, he knew the place well.

He was due, he thought, for a little play—and Helen Wilson seemed, outwardly at least, an ideal playmate. He liked the way she let the

breeze created by the speed of the car have its way with her short, smartly cut dark hair. Technically, he supposed, he was being unfaithful to Marcia—but he didn't feel technical at the moment.

He felt pleasantly anticipatory, even mildly excited.

Yet his past, his purpose, continued to gnaw at him. He said, "How well do you know Marcia?"

Without taking her eyes from the road, Helen replied, "I've known that poor, possessed creature since she was a kid. We went to the same finishing school together—that was when my old man had dough. What Marcia needs is a man—but her father won't let go, and that disgusting Bolling creature won't do her any good." Then, after a pause, "But I don't intend to be pumped about Marcia Lane, thank you. So mind your manners."

"I shall endeavor to maintain them at a properly despicable level," he told her.

"That's more like it," she said. Her near hand patted his thigh. "Sometimes life seems almost worth living."

She parked and they walked into the low, rambling white wood and fieldstone structure that was the *Chimney Pot*. And Harrington walked into a well of loneliness.

It was shocking. Rico, the professionally pleasant host, greeted Helen warmly—and had merely a courtesy nod for him. It was the same with Patrick, the waiter; Jimmy, the bushboy; and the lachrimose and lanky Marie, who played her expert, cocktail jazz patterns on the little yacht piano. It was the same with perhaps a baker's dozen of their fellow diners, whom he had known, more or less, well over a number of summers.

Fiercely, Harrington reminded himself that this was what he had sought—relief from the endless glad-handing and back-slapping and insistent camaraderie that had helped to clutter up his life so hopelessly on his own world. This was anonymity, this was peace.

Unfortunately, it was something else—something he had not expected, something he was sorely unequipped for. This was loneliness as well. This was, for Harrington, a form of death.

"Come on up out of that basement," Helen said to him, smiling over the lip of a double martini.

"Coming right up," he replied, lifting his own long-stemmed glass. He decided, to hell with everybody. He decided to get drunk.

He did.

HE AWOKE on a strange, lumpy, mattress, with noon sunlight streaming through a jerry-built frame window to sear his eyeballs. He awoke alone. There was a note, scrawled in lipstick, on a shred of paper on the cheap bureau. It was very brief. It read—

*Sorry, darling. But you offered me the finest of fresh starts, and that's what I need most. So long—Helen.*

For a long moment, he stared at it stupidly, trying to make sense out of the cyp-tic message. Then, he noticed that his wallet was lying on the bureau, instead of in the jacket he or Helen must have draped over the back of the room's one chair.

Three \$100 bills, a \$50 bill and two twenties had vanished. Remaining were a ten, a five and four ones. Rather an expensive little dinner, he decided, feeling numb.

He looked around the room, saw his billfold lying on the floor by the disheveled bed. With sudden panic, he picked it up. There had been two \$1000 bills in it the last time he had looked. Now there was nothing.

"The little tramp!" he exclaimed aloud, feeling temper force its way upward through his hangover.

The words of the note Hel-

en had left jogged his memory—something about "the freshest of fresh starts." And temper gave way to panic. Somehow he knew, as he dug for the watch-pocket in his discarded trousers, that the silveroid disc, his return passage to a world where Neal Harrington existed and belonged, would be gone.

It was.

He sat down on the edge of the bed and ran nicotine-stained fingers through his dark hair. He must have talked while he was drunk. It was unlikely the sexy little so-and-so could have known about *Outouriste*—though barely possible. It was less likely she could have spotted him as an interplanetary transferee. So he must have talked.

Then, as his mind continued to function, he felt relief. Surely, if the stolen disc had been keyed to his own cell and brain-patterns, it would do her little good. And, once he got legal wheels rolling, she wouldn't be able to get very far with her loot. Not a girl as widely known as she was.

But did he dare call in the law. It would, he decided, be wiser to let *Outouriste* handle it. He got into his clothes and stepped out in search of a telephone. She had left him,

apparently, in a shabby motel, not far from the Connecticut line. She had also, it appeared, paid for the night's lodging; no one knew exactly when she had left.

He got *Outouriste* on Long Distance, was first astonished, then frightened by the impersonal non-cooperation that necessarily-discreet travel bureau displayed. All he could obtain from them was promise of an investigation—also a promise that they would forward him the funds he had banked there on first coming through. Once his attested signature was forwarded.

Staring at the telephone, after hanging up and paying for the call, Harrington indulged in some rapid calculation. He had brought with him, a little over \$5,000 in cash, had banked three of it. His bill at the club could only be well into several times three figures by this time. A new return disc would cost \$10,000. He was about \$7,500 dollars short.

He called the club and arranged to have a car sent out to pick him up. Somehow—though he didn't know how—he felt certain that Helen had passed through the barrier into his own world.

**L**ATE THAT afternoon, via another long distance call, he was informed this was

so. They would be glad to forward his funds, steps were already being taken. They were terribly sorry over what had happened, but he had been informed of the importance of keeping possession of his disc. A replacement would cost \$10,000. No, there was no way of arranging a loan for such an amount under the circumstances.

Apparently, *Outouriste* considered him a poor risk, he decided. He decided, further, that he couldn't blame them.

He felt purpose growing hard within him, as he returned to the porch and looked out over the green fairway with its background frieze of darker green hills against the pale, near-sunset sky. If he did nothing else, he decided, he was going to raise enough cash to get back in time to catch up with Helen and deal with her as she deserved to be dealt with. He had no plan of revenge as yet—that he could develop while he handled the preliminaries.

But how in hell, on an alien world in which he had no real identity, was he going to raise the cash?

That, he decided, was the first question. The rest could wait. He looked around for the waiter, to order himself a cocktail, and saw Marcia Lane standing in the doorway. Almost without con-

scious volition, he found himself rising and asking her to join him.

She hesitated, looked around as if to make sure there was no one present to forbid her, then did so. Her shyness was painfully apparent. She said, "I'm not as much fun as Nell."

"Nell?" Harrington asked, puzzled.

"Oh—Helen. She used to be Nell," said Marcia. How long have you known her?"

"Just met her," he said. "Why?"

"Oh..." She hesitated. "I thought so..." A pause, then, "I went to school with her."

"I know," he said. Then, out of sudden curiosity, "Tell me, Miss Lane—what did you think of her?"

"I don't know." Her so-familiar blue eyes fell away from his. "It's hard to say about her. I guess maybe I was jealous of her. I guess maybe I still am—a little. She's *lived* so much."

"You could call it that," he said with a trace of grimness. She caught it and looked at him quickly, almost furtively, with a flicker of hope. Instinctively, he knew this was the moment to strike. She might not know him, but she knew he had been with Helen the night before, and this fact gave him glamour in her eyes. He said, "I wonder—would

you do me the kindness of having dinner with me to-night?"

Her hand stirred on the table, as if to fly to her mouth. She restrained the gesture and the sudden fright faded from her eyes. She said, "I'm afraid you'd find me rather..." Then, blushing and almost stammering. "I—I can't. I'm having dinner here with Father. And with Harvey—Mr. Bolling."

"Helen thinks he's bad for you," Harrington said, following up boldness with boldness. He could all but read her thoughts as he hesitated before replying. He and Helen had talked about her—and he still wanted her to dine with him. He added, "Surely you can break a date with your own father."

"It's not that—exactly," she said, equivocating. Then, with a frightened little rush of words, "Why don't you have dinner with us?" Concluding on a note of triumphant solution.

Harrington knew he was in.

HE HAD to play his card perfectly, of course—but as far as he was concerned the entire deck was marked. He was sufficiently rude to the Boll Weevil to make Marcia's father expansive, without creating a scene. He dropped a remark or two,



quite casually, which suggested he might know a thing or two about conditions in Colombia that were not general knowledge. He professed a loathing for the location of a sand trap on the seventeenth hole which, he knew all too well, invariably caught the millionaire's very best drives.

He thanked his stars that, thanks to the Boll Weevil's behavior on his own world, he had looked sufficiently into the Colombian deal to know which way that particularly treacherous cat was going to jump. He said a silent prayer to the same stars that conditions should be similar in this parallel world.

And, while a discomfitted Boll Weevil and Marcia were dancing, he suggested to the millionaire a trial balloon speculation which, if it went according to Hoyle, should make him a quick hundred thousand dollars. He offered to handle it through Lane's own broker, so that there could be no possibility of fraud.

The millionaire studied him when the others returned, then, dropping all pretence at affability, growled, "I don't know you, Harrington; I don't know why I should listen to you. I think you've weaseled your way in here to try to rob me."

"Father!" exclaimed Marcia, aghast.

"Just what I've been trying to tell her," the Boll Weevil put in.

"Shut up, you nincompoop," snapped Mark Lane, the flush of anger showing dully beneath his walnut tan. And to Harrington, "If you're what I think you are, I'll make you wish you'd never been born, young man." He got up, said, "Come on, Marcia; let's go somewhere the air is purer."

He stomped on out of the dining room, leaving Harrington to pay the check. He did so, feeling as if some hard-hoofed animal had kicked him in the solar plexus, wondering just what he had done that was wrong. Ignoring more than one inviting and attractive pair of eyes, he pushed his way past the diners and dancers and walked up two flights to his room.

There, he flung himself on the bed and chain-smoked, wondering what in hell he was going to do.

Getting started without identity in a postwar world was almost impossible. He could, he suppose, go to New York and raise hell around *Outouriste*. But any such bureau, able to keep its existence a virtual closed secret on two worlds, could hardly afford to have loose ends like

himself threatening it with exposure. He had an idea they would handle such a threat swiftly, discreetly—and with finality.

He did some silent cursing—against Helen; against Dr. Jenner; against Mark Lane, and—most of all—against himself.

How long he lay there he had no idea—but he was roused, ultimately, by a soft knock at the door. He said, "Come on," and sat up, half expecting it to be the state constabulary.

It was Marcia, the too-old little-girl spinster Marcia of this world he appeared to be stuck in. She said, breathlessly, "I'm terribly sorry about what happened, Mr. Harrington. Sometimes Father makes me so ashamed. But he can't abide to be hurried, and..."

He scarcely heard the rest of what she said as a dazzling jackpot display lit up inside him. Of all the idiots, he thought, he was the biggest. How many times had he seen his own Mark Lane pull this same trick on some over-eager young man with a proposition to offer. The better the proposition sounded, the more suspicious the millionaire became—and the more explosive his defensive outburst.

Why, he had even used to laugh with Marcia—his Marcia—about it. They called it

her father's personal Paracutin, his self-detonating volcano. He realized, however, that there was nothing comical about being on the receiving end of such a blast. It meant—and he hardly needed to hear the spinster Marcia's apologetic, "...I just thought you'd like to know he's going to try it—I heard him arguing with Harvey about it."—that he was in after all.

He put his hands on her shoulders and, while in substance they were no slimmer than those of his wife, they seemed less functional, less substantial, like all of her. He felt her tremble at his touch—something, he thought sardonically, his wife had long ceased to do. He said, "You know, your coming here is one of the sweetest things that ever happened to me."

He kissed her and, at the touch of familiar lips, the pressure of a familiar body, he did this and that, little things which, in years gone by, had served to stimulate the other Marcia. She came blazingly, pantingly alive—and he felt like a total heel.

He let her subside gently, then patted her shoulders and said, "Now get the hell out of here before we both get in trouble."

And the oddest part of it was, he meant it.

**T**HREE DAYS later, he was back in New York—back in his own New York. And, with the passage of time, his rage against Helen Wilson had become a driving purpose. *Outouriste* had been polite, obliging and utterly unhelpful. They were looking, yes; they would find the young woman, almost certainly. And they would then take steps—the proper steps.

The steps Harrington planned to take with that interesting if not so young woman, were far from proper. He intended to do to her, as nearly as was possible, exactly what she had done to him. He intended to run her to earth, then force her to stay with him on pain of reporting her to *Outouriste*. Then, fiegning passion, he intended to fly away with her—quite literally—and deposit her, without funds, on some such location as Easter Island. Without passport or identification or his backing, he wondered what she would do.

Let the punishment fit the crime—and if interest had been added, well, he had something coming to him for the money and property she had taken—almost \$13,000 worth.

Marcia, of course, was up in the Berkshires with her father and the Boll Weevil, so Harrington had the town house to himself. He reported

to Dr. Jenner, who professed himself to be amazed at the rapid pace of his recovery. And Harrington, who had turned a deal that morning with an audacity and firmness he had thought lost forever, said, "Joe, I don't know what you did to me—I suspect you had me under some sort of hypnosis. It cost me plenty—but it worked."

The doctor looked at him oddly. He said, "Well, that's what really matters, isn't it?"

Harrington said, "You're not trying to tell me it really happened, are you? It couldn't have!"

"Something happened—you know that," Jenner told him quietly.

"Sure," said Harrington, not daring to believe. He didn't want to remember as real the pathetically helpless other-world version of his Marcia his subconscious had created under hypnosis—or whatever it was Jenner had done to him via the *Outouriste* camouflage. He knew enough psychology to know what a jerk this made him.

But he had to believe in Helen, he discovered with some confusion. Without the driving purpose her robbery had recreated within him, he'd still be mooning around on the clubhouse porch. Walking up Park Avenue, he looked for the *Outouriste* office,

found it, felt uneasily of the little silveroid disc tucked under his trouser waistband. If he went in there, he could...

Or could he?

Resolutely, he walked on by.

But, at the corner, he hesitated by a newsstand. Marcia, the imagined or other-world Marcia, had done almost as much for him as Helen. Which Marcia, granted he had a choice, did he really prefer? Irrelevantly, he chanked God there had been no children.

His eyes wandered to a large picture on the front page of the *Journal American*. It was a fuzzy screened job, messed up with printer's ink. But it was unmistakably Helen. He bought a copy, numbly, turned it over to read the caption. It read—

*Dazed Beauty Tells Strange Story...*

**H**ELEN was in Bellevue, apparently after taking an overdose of sleeping medicine in an East Side hotel where she was registered. She had given City physicians several names, one of which struck Harrington like a billiard cue between the eyes. Her original name, she insisted, was *Nell Harrington*. And the home town she insisted was hers was his own—as her age was his own. The

authorities, the story went on, had been unable to trace her, were hoping someone would come forward to take her off their hands.

No wonder, Harrington thought, the other-world Marcia had asked him how long he had known her. She had gone to school with Helen Wilson—Nell Harrington, must have remarked the similarity of names, have noted a similarity of feature. For, now that he knew the truth, Harrington could see the resemblance staring back at him out of the fuzzy newspaper picture as from a dusty mirror.

No wonder there had been no alter ego, no Neal Harrington in the other world; there he had been born Nell Harrington instead!

He wondered how he could have missed it. Knowing, he could trace a number of parallels—damned few of them flattering. And he wondered...

With a shudder, he put down the paper, walked to a hotel across the street and closeted himself in a telephone booth. There were certain advantages to being Mark Lane's son-in-law—amongst them, the privilege of cutting official red tape. Within a very few hours, he had her out of Bellevue and

registered secretly, under a very different name, at another quiet East Side hostelry.

Her face stiffened when she entered and found him there. But she removed her hat, looked around and poured herself a drink from the bottle he had waiting, before she said, "Well, you've got me. What are you going to do about me?"

He said, frankly, "I don't know. Nell—not yet." And he didn't. "You know who—and what—we are?"

She nodded. She said, "I spotted you right away—your name was the key, of course. And I'd heard about *Outouriste*—I've been around. I had a lot of trouble catching up with me at home, and you seemed to offer me a heaven-sent way out. I had a pretty good idea your disc would match my patterns—why shouldn't it?" She paused and, when he said nothing, added, "It was a lousy trick and I'm sorry. Especially since it doesn't seem to have worked."

"Not for you," he said. "But it came out pretty well for me. Not that I wasn't sore. Until I read that story in the paper this afternoon, I was plotting out revenges like a Medieval wazir. You left me in a hell of a spot, you know. I was way short of cash to buy another return ticket.

And a loan was out of the question."

She looked frightened. "I am sorry about that," she said. "What did you do about it?"

He sketched it in for her. Then he said, "One thing I'm glad about—I didn't blab to you about *Outouriste* while I was loaded."

She shook her head, told him, "That's one thing about us—we don't talk in our cups."

**I**T GAVE him a start to hear her refer to the two of them under one pronoun. He winced, hesitated, then said, "Nell what the devil did happen between us at the motel that night?"

The faint trace of a smile gave warmth to her lips. "I could give you a bad time about that," she said. "But I guess I've given you enough trouble already I had to carry you in and undress you; you were snoring before you hit the pad."

"You're leveling?" he asked anxiously.

"Im leveling," she said, meeting his gaze.

He accepted it. But this girl, he knew, had a lot of the devil in her—a lot of the same devil that had helped bring him close to a breakdown. And, being a woman, she had been unable to work it out in football or shooting down

Japs. He understood her restlessness, her wild adventurousness, all to well. And he knew he would never be quite sure.

He changed the subject. "What do you want to do now?" he asked. "Stay here or go back?"

Her eyes seemed to sink into her head as she contemplated the question. Her hand shook as she put down her glass. She said, "You don't know—but of course you do—what it's like to find yourself in a world where you don't really exist. That's what broke me up, once I realized what I was up against. It may sound corny, but I seem to have just learned that none of us is alone—that we've got to have help, no matter how rugged we are."

"How much will you need to clean up everything in your own world?" he asked her gently.

She said, "About fifteen grand—but haven't I cost you enough already?"

"Curiously enough, not as much as you seem to have given me," he told her. "Plus the fact that I feel a certain—well, family responsibility for you. You'll have the cash in the morning."

He got up and she came to him and kissed him—a warm, surprisingly sisterly kiss. She

said, "Will I see you again, Neal?"

"Probably not," he told her. "Take care of yourself; and do a favor for me, will you?"

"Anything!" she told him and meant it. Then she grinned and added, "In a way. I'll be doing a favor for myself, won't I?"

"I'm serious," he replied gravely. "Do something for Marcia Lane, will you? She thinks you're rather wonderful. So be rather wonderful. Find somebody—not like you or me—who can get her out from under her father's thumb, will you? Somebody swell. Not that ghastly Boll Weevil character."

She looked into his eyes. She sighed and said, "You must like to make it tough. But, by God, I'll do it!"

"You'd better," he told her. "I might decide to transfer over just to check. I could still make things hot over the way you rolled me."

"You forget," she countered, "you have no legal standing on my world." Then mockery fading, "Don't worry, Neal—I'll find her the right husband if I have to break him in myself."

"And none of that, either," he said.

"Really, I'll be good," she said; "but what are you going to do, Neal?"

He looked at her in surprise, not at her question but at the discovery that he had the answer, must have had it for some time without knowing it. He said, "I'm going up to the Berkshires and raise a little hell with my own Boll Weevil. I've been civilized just a little too long. And I've

found out, thanks partly to you, the things I resented in my family were created by my own short-comings. I'm going to straighten things out."

She looked at him softly and sighed and said, "Isn't it a dirty shame we're we? Think what a team we would have made otherwise!"

### READIN' AND WRITHIN'

[continued from page 95]

"The Mother of Necessity" is a wry, witty, good-humored story about a social-engineering project that backfires: slight, but handled with surprising depth and maturity.

"Rite of Passage" is about the now-familiar "primitive" tribe that turns out to be a gang of supermen—unsurprising, since it's been done so often, but unusually well handled. This story, incidentally, contains the sentence which curdled William Atheling's milk—and which, I'm surprised and delighted to find, doesn't bother me at all. The sentence reads: "Even here, Martin Ashley thought, so far from home, the night still came." Night-fall is what Atheling calls it, a universal commonplace; but it's also a potent symbol of awe, exactly right in its context. Moreover, by heaven, this is exactly the kind of dazed, trying-to-grasp-it thing that *would* occur to a man newly landed on a strange planet. An over-refined writer would have rejected it as banal; it's to Oliver's special credit that he didn't.

"Scientific Method" is the dud. For my taste, at any rate, this variant of the "First Contact" theme is insensitive, over-derivative, and unconvincing.

"Night," although probably anthropological nonsense, is a deeply moving treatment of cultural impacts.

"Transformer"—the *F* & *SF* fantasy which deals grimly and wittily with the secret lives of model-train town "people"—is a typical Oliver, notably well written even in this collection, but minor in intent.

"Artifact," which begins casually enough, with a flint scraping tool found on the lifeless deserts of Mars, builds into the most massive, mind-widening, shock ending in recent memory. This story contains the "sense of wonder," the feeling which science fiction exists to create, in such measure that it hits you with an almost physical jolt.

And "A Star Above It" is a painful collection of mistakes about time travel. The author, idiotically

[Continued On Page 140]

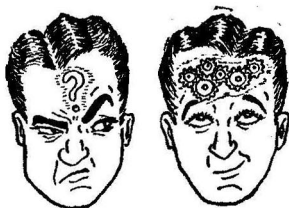
# ISAAC ASIMOV'S

## "The Caves Of Steel"

A Review in Verse

by Randall Garrett

(who drew the picture, too)



These parodies are perpetrated in the spirit of good fun, and no offense to either author or story is intended. In all cases, the author has seen the parody, and has approved, between gusts of laughter.

In the future, when the towns are caves of steel  
Clear from Boston, Massachusetts, to Mobile,  
There's a cop, Elijah Baley, who's the hero of this tale. He  
Has a Spacer robot helper named Daneel.

For it seems that there's some guys from Outer Space  
(They're descendants of the Terran human race),  
And all over Terra's globe, it seems they're giving jobs to  
robots,  
Which are hated by the people they replace.

So a certain Spacer, Sarton, gets rubbed out,  
And the Chief says to Elijah: "Be a scout;  
Go and find out just whodunit, and, although it won't be fun, it  
Will result in your promotion, without doubt!"

The assignment puts Elijah on the spot.  
He must do the job up right; if he does not,  
It not only will disgrace him, but the robot will replace him  
If the robot is the first to solve the plot.

In the city, there's a riot at a store.  
R. Daneel jumps on a counter, and before  
Baley knows it, pulls his blaster. Then he bellows: "I'm the  
master  
Here, so stop it, or I'll blow you off the floor!"



So the riot's busted up before it starts,  
And Elijah's wounded ego really smarts.  
"Well," he says, "you quelled that riot, but a *robot* wouldn't try it!

Dan, I think you've got a screw loose in your parts!"

Baley doesn't see how R. Daneel could draw  
Out his blaster, for the First Robotic Law  
Says: "No robot may, through action or inaction, harm a fraction  
Of a whisker on a human being's jaw."

Since Daneel, the robot, has a human face,  
And he looks exactly like the guy from space  
Who has been assassinated, Mr. Baley's quite elated,  
For he's positive he's solved the murder case!

"The Commissioner," he says, "has been misled,  
'Cause there hasn't been a murder! No one's dead!  
Why you did it, I don't know, but I don't think you are a robot!  
I am certain you are Sarton, sir, instead!"

"Why, that's rather silly, partner," says Daneel,  
"And I'm awful sorry that's the way you feel."  
Then, by peeling back his skin, he shows Elijah that, within, he  
Is constructed almost totally of steel!

Well, of course, this gives Elijah quite a shock.  
So he thinks the whole thing over, taking stock  
Of the clues in their relation to the total situation,  
Then he goes and calls a special robot doc.

Says Elijah Baley: "Dr. Gerrigel,  
This here murder case is just about to jell!  
And to bust it open wide, I'll prove this robot's homicidal!  
Look him over, doc, and see if you can tell."

So the doctor gives Daneel a thorough test  
While the robot sits there, calmly self-possessed.  
After close examination, "His First Law's in operation,"  
Says the doctor, "You can set your mind at rest."

That leaves Baley feeling somewhat like a jerk,

But Daneel is very difficult to irk;  
He just says: "We can't stand still, or we will never find the killer.

Come on, partner, let us buckle down to work."

Now the plot begins to thicken—as it should;  
It's the thickening in plots that makes 'em good.  
The Police Chief's robot, Sammy, gives himself the double whammy.

And the reason for it isn't understood.

The Commissioner says: "Baley, you're to blame!  
Robot Sammy burned his brain out, and I claim  
That, from every single clue, it looks as though *you* made him do it!"

Baley hollers: "No, I didn't! It's a frame!"

Then he says: "Commish, I think that you're the heel  
Who's the nasty little villain in this deal!  
And I'll tell you to your face, I really think you killed the Spacer,  
'Cause you thought he was the robot, R. Daneel!"

The Commissioner breaks down and mumbles: "Yes—  
I'm the guy who did it, Baley—I confess!"  
Baley says: "I knew in time you would confess this awful crime. You  
Understand, of course, you're in an awful mess!"

The Commissioner keels over on the floor.  
When he wakes up, R. Daneel says: "We're not sore;  
Since the crime was accidental, we'll be merciful and gentle.  
Go," he says in solemn tones, "and sin no more!"

Then says Baley to the robot, with a grin:  
"It was nice of you to overlook his sin.  
As a friend, I wouldn't trade you! By the Asimov who made you,  
You're a better man than I am, Hunks Tiar!"

Wouldn't life be so much simpler of spelling could be simplified, or regularized? Would it?

# COMES THE REVOLUTION

by DONALD FRANSON

Illustrated by Emsch

**S**KAGWAY complained, "Why did it have to be me? Why couldn't he pick on somebody else?"

"You're the biggest booster of simplified spelling around here," reasoned Parker. "Maybe he read your book."

Professor Skagway glared. "If he did he's the only one." He leaned forward and took the letter back, pocketed it. "I've already talked to the lawyer about this. There's no catch to it. But—"

"Well, what's your objection then? Seems like the opportunity of a lifetime to me. With all that money to spend—who knows?—you might make a dent in the armor of inertia."

"But what can I do?"



"Make an effort."

Skagway looked exasperated. "I mean, what can I do with *money*? What am I supposed to do, bribe teachers? Change the textbooks? Legislation? Don't make me sound like a political science professor."

"Milder methods then, on a large scale."

"What, for example, publicity? They've been trying *that* for fifty years. All right—so I can do it in a bigger way. I could probably spend half this amount on comic books, maybe get Junior to spell a few words my way, but what happens when he gets to school? Back to bribing teachers again."

Parker shrugged. "Regard-

less of the difficulties, you ought to make some effort. You've been advocating—"

SKAGWAY interrupted impatiently. "I know. I've been advocating it for, oh, twenty years now. And all I've been able to do so far is get my book accepted in a few colleges—not as a textbook, mind you, but just as a kind of curiosity, like a book on Esperanto or hieroglyphics. But that's just why I can't say no to this—make me look like a fool after all these years of ranting and raving. Blast him, I never even heard of Rochester B. Goffer before. Why didn't he let me live in peace? Now I've got to go through with it, or they'll tar and feather me. And no matter what I do, I know it won't work. You can't change people, in spite of what I may have said in my book."

"Maybe you could stall along until the time limit runs out—what is it, five years?"

"Huh? Oh, the time limit. Ten years. Ten years to do what two generations couldn't accomplish. It's really just an arbitrary time limit though, subject to extension. But if the executors find that absolutely *nothing* has been accomplished up to that time, then the money that's left reverts to something else. No, I don't want to do that, either.

I want to spend the money on this—not let it get away. Seems the next in line is a home for stray cats or something. But I do want to spend it honestly, where it can do some good. Frankly, I don't see how. I hate to admit it, but it looks like I'm going to publish a whole lot of material for posterity to leave unread."

"What was that part about salary?"

"There's a salary attached—not much, but enough so I can afford to neglect some of my other work." Skagway got up to leave. "I'll try anyway. I owe it to my conscience, and to Rochester. At least he had sense enough not to pick Rooney. That crackpot—"

"Let me know how you get along," said Parker hurriedly, to stop the impending Rooney tirade.

"**D**ID you see the Board?" asked Parker.

Skagway slammed the briefcase down on the desk. "Yes I saw the Board, and the League, and the Association, and all the rest of the riff-raff. Their idea of progress is to paint the old Model T a bright new two-tone. You know, they still think it was a great achievement, getting people to knock the final 'u-e' off 'catalog'. No credit to

them. People just got tired writing it."

"Sounds like you had it out with them," said Parker.

Skagway sat down wearily. "Oh, I gave them each a grant. Spirit of Goffer's will—but it won't do any good. They advocate glacial change—they forget that a glacier takes ten thousand years to sweep across a country."

"What do you want, a revolution?"

"You bet I want a revolution! English spelling is sick—it needs a major operation, not a few band-aids here and there."

Parker nodded. "How about the book writers?"

"I even saw Rooney. He's not such a bad character, once you get to know him. Personally they're all nice fellows. But—each one's got a different system. Some of them are worse than the spelling we've got now."

"Looks like your first job is getting all the different systems together," suggested Parker.

"Well, I have done something along that line," said Skagway. "I got them all to form a correspondence club—the least simian ones, that is. But it looks like a long, hard row to hoe. See there, hoe, spelled h-o-e. That fool, Motley, wants that to represent

the 'oh' sound, instead of o-w, which is phonetic at least. How about shoe?"

"How about cow?"

"You keep out of this; you're a layman. Parker, I don't want to compromise. This may be a worthwhile job after all; I might even get them all to accept my system."

"Good for you," said Parker doubtfully.

"IF YOU really want to simplify spelling," said Forbes, the chemistry professor, elbows on the table, "Highland here could dream up an electronic brain that would do it for you in nothing flat."

Dr. Williams offered, "I could work out a system mathematically."

"What, in mathematical symbols?" sneered Kolinsky. "Who could read it—an Einstein?"

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" protested Parker. "You're getting way off the subject. I invited you here to this—well, it's sort of a symposium in a way—to help out Professor Skagway. But he doesn't need a new system of spelling; he already has one. What he needs is a new approach on how to put it over. I thought a variety of minds, some new ways of looking at the problem, would uncover methods

that Skagway himself would never think of. But please, give the professor credit in his own field!"

Dr. Byng, the psychologist said, "This whole campaign is wrong. Pressure won't do it. Only the people themselves can do it. They have to be shown, not pushed."

"What about all this?" demanded Skagway, indicating the now disordered heans of literature covering the table.

"Keep trying," said Byng, dismally. "It may be working, slowly, inside." He tapped his temple. "They have to change by themselves of their own free will; otherwise resentment will set in." He reached for the pile of scrapbooks containing press clippings. Skagway had conscientiously labeled them *favorable* and *unfavorable*.

**B**YNG OPENED the most bulging one, began quoting at random. "'Capitalist would force his personal quirks on the masses'—*Daily Satellite*. 'Pinko prof wants to scrap Daniel Webster'—*Daily Torch*. 'Latest survey shows marked drop in Skagway sentiment from a year ago.' 'Ill-advised letter-writing campaign has foredoomed legislation, in the opinion of the *Messenger-Times*.'"

"Do you know the principle of the torque converter?"

asked Professor Highland. "The tougher the resistance, the stronger the pull becomes. In this case, it works in the opposite direction. The harder Skagway tries, the stronger the *resistance* becomes."

"It's the same as the law of power politics," agreed Kolin-sky.

"Speaking of politics, you never stood a chance on this legislation, Skagway," said Forbes. "If the President of the United States couldn't get away with it—"

"The President? Who was that?" asked Parker.

"Teddy Roosevelt," said Forbes. "Then take the metric system—that's more important than this, in my opinion—they can't even make that standard."

"They do it overnight in some countries," said Kolin-sky.

"But not here," said Forbes.

Dr. Williams put in, "I'm afraid this is just one of those things that everyone agrees is good, and everyone else agrees is impossible to bring about. Like disarmament. Now, there's a subject—"

"Has anybody got a concrete suggestion?" shouted Skagway impolitely.

**T**WO-THIRDS of the gathering raised their eyebrows. The rest shrugged their shoulders. "Hypno-

tism?" cracked Forbes. There was a moment of silence, the first that evening.

"Your system uses no new letters, I understand," said Highland. "Ideal for a typewriter then. Why with your system, I could almost devise a typewriter that would—anyway I could imagine one. The problems would be very complex, now that I think of it—"

"Typewriter that would what?" asked Byng, more irritated than mystified.

"Translate sound right into print."

"I thought that was old stuff. What's a teletype then?"

"Still has to be typed in the first place. No, there are a good many problems involved—maybe the oscillograph would be the solution. Anyway, here's a concrete idea—why can't Skagway use some of his money to finance the invention of such a machine?"

"Now you're getting off the subject," said Kolinsky.

"No, I think it would help along his cause, since it would have to use his phonetic spelling or it wouldn't work."

Now Skagway protested. "That's putting the cart before the horse, Highland. This sound-typing machine that you imagine would no doubt benefit from my spell-

ing, but how would my spelling benefit?"

"Publicity, if nothing else," said Highland.

Forbes put in dryly, "An advertising campaign in another good bottomless pit, if you want to waste your money."

**T**WO HOURS later, Highland leaned toward Skagway with a smile. "Don't be discouraged. They all end up like this—but if one new idea grows out of it we consider it a great success."

Skagway looked doubtful as he glanced around the littered table. Williams was scribbling furiously, covering pamphlet after pamphlet with mathematical formulas, while carrying on a heated argument with Parker on the relationship of gravity and magnetism. Byng and Kolinsky were going to town on the subject of simple society vs. civilization, and Forbes was adding his sarcastic comments impartially to both arguments. Kolinsky was using one of Skagway's heavy scrapbooks to hammer home a point, and papers were fluttering away unnoticed at every blow.

"You must have collected nearly all there is in print on the subject," said Highland.

"All," said Skagway glum-

ly. "Those clipping bureaus don't miss a thing."

A stray clipping fell in front of him. "'Kanfurens' through tonight. Spelling convention ends in brawl."

"Invent one? There already is such a machine," said Mr. Gale, of Better Business Machines. "Our sister company in Germany, Besser, has had one for several years. The Besser machine is sold all over Europe. You know, Mr. Skagway, I have had many inquiries about them." He shook his head regretfully. "They can't handle English."

"**W**HAT DID you waste nineteen hundred dollars on that thing for?" asked Parker. "Even if it is Mr. Goffer's money?"

Skagway frowned. "Well, for one thing, it teaches me to be very exact in my pronunciation. I'm getting so I can almost speak a perfect page of typing—in German, of course."

"But how's that going to help? You'll have to account for the expense some way."

"Oh, I don't know. I'll have to write it off as an experiment, I guess. May get some use out of it though—I'm thinking of demonstrating it on one of my TV programs. Show the people what they're

missing by not having phonetic spelling. Seems a shame we should lag behind the Spanish, Norwegian, Japanese—"

"Subject for tonight's television debate: 'Is spelling reform as far away as ever?' Guests: Professor Skagway—"

"Get the ball game."

"Looka dis, Mike, in da garbage. Simplify spelling, a magazine. Ha, ha, I always spell dis way."

"Comes the revolution, we will all have easier working, good living, simplified spelling... To hail with simplified spelling, who put that in there? There's a traitor in the speech-writers' committee—"

"**M**R. SKAGWAY, I'm perfectly willing to take your word on it either way," said the lawyer.

"I've had enough."

"Then according to the terms of the will, the remainder—the original amount less itemized expenses—will revert to the Goffer estate and the next beneficiary, Kittihaven. Now if you will please sign this paper—"

"Clear out these Professor Skagway books at—let's see—



thirty-nine cents. Bargain table, outside. Make a sign—uh—'language of the future'."

Mr. Appleton, as was his habit, went right to the point. "I've called this meeting to get your opinion on this. It came to me, that if we got five or six thousand inquiries, over a period of some ten years, about an English model of the Besser Sonograf machine, and have even sold a number of imported machines on the strength of this mere curiosity—it came to me, how many would we sell if we did some pushing ourselves? I propose to bring out an English model, make it here—" Mr. Appleton's voice was drowned out in the general hubbub of protests and disapproval.

"Now just a minute," he shouted. "I know all your objections. We've been so accustomed to saying it can't handle English, we've convinced ourselves of it beyond all reasoning." He picked up a faded green volume from a stack, held it up. "I have a book here, that may solve our problem. It's some crackpot professor's simplified spelling—but it's well thought out. Don't object—here's my idea: Why don't we put out a sound-writer based on this phonetic spelling, give a copy of the book with it, and push

the machine for office use only? *Memos* don't have to be in perfect English—why, this thing might run the present dictating machines right off the market—"

"But the cost of the Sonograf—"

"Get the cost down by engineering and mass production. What's our motto, anyway? 'Better can always do it better'."

There was a further uproar, not of protest, but of discussion let loose. Mr. Appleton's voice rose above the tumult. "Get the best men on development first, then advertising—"

"**I**T WON'T work," said Miller. "We can't swallow Skagway whole. All those added H's—have to strike two keys for one sound, like C-H. I think we'll have to have five or six extra characters."

"Please, not that," said Allen. "There'll be enough resistance to this without people seeing spots before their eyes, or Chinese."

Miller reconsidered. "Well then, we could have a special type-face for C-H, S-H, Z-H, and what did I forget—T-H."

"There are two T-H's. Thick and thin, I mean, this and that—" said Professor Bunton.

Joe Davis, chief technician

of the project, spoke up. "That shouldn't bother us. This typewriter can take two different sounds and print the same symbol, can't it? Let it worry the reading-machine boys, if any."

MILLER nodded approval. "Sounds all right to me. Are we all agreed on using Skagway's alphabet, then?"

Allen was looking through the book. "O for Aw. Sounds Russian. What's the matter with O for Oboe?"

"That's a diphthong," informed Bunton. "But I don't like his A-H for Ah, broad A. It looks very clumsy when you combine it with other vowels. R-A-H-Y-T is just as bad as R-I-G-H-T."

"Now let's not pick Skagway to pieces," said Miller. "He had to separate broad A from short A some way. And O is plenty busy elsewhere."

"How about and A with two dots above it?" suggested Bunton.

"No dots!" said Allen firmly.

"In German, A with two dots over is Ay," put in Dr. Schmerz, who came with the machine.

"Yeah, that's just what we don't want it to mean," said Allen.

"But we've got to have something," said Miller. "Why not some substitute for

short A, leave broad A alone?"

"I'll see what Rooney uses," said Allen, going through a pile of books.

"Okay," said Miller. "Now, outside of that, I say we stick to Skagway, with his Russian O and all the rest. It's the only system that's both phonetic and readable."

"Double A," said Allen, coming out of the book. "Like in Aaron."

"In German—" began Dr. Schmerz.

"Never mind," said Miller. "We'll use it. Go ahead and set it up that way."

Joe Davis had a sudden thought, after Miller had left. "What if you mean *no* and it prints *now*?"

Dr. Schmerz threw up his hands.

ALLEN PUT down the phone. "Mr. Greenpoint says fix his talk-a-type machine. No matter how he says thirty-third, it always comes out thoity-thoid." He drummed his fingers on the desk. "Now you've got a problem, Joe. Make it say thirty-third, but not burr for boy. Here's where the book says that if the machine can't be adjusted, people must change. I don't want the job of changing people. Fix that machine, Joe."

"SAY 'AH'," said Dr. Schmerz.

"Ah."

"Say 'Hopalong Cassidy'. 'No ice today'. Once more. Hmm." Dr. Schmerz straightened up. "Mr. Baker, I'm a technician, not a doctor. I adjust the Schograf, not you. But you *must* say the words the same way each time you say them. You must with the machine, co-operate. Now try once more. 'Join the guard, Sherman Brown'."

"Take a letter, Miss Smith. Hollywood Prop and Supply Company. We ordered two dozen cots to be delivered today—get away, kitty, get off the desk. Due to an error of the writing machine we had—"

Memo: When you write to customers, use the standard spelling. Never use a talk-a-type except for interoffice memos and reports. We find that people throw away our letters fast enough as it is.

"MA, WHAT does 'lie gull' mean?"

"L-Y-G-U-L. That's 'legal'. And keep away from your father's papers. I don't want you picking up any of that awful spelling."

*Atomic Business Management*, page ninety-one: A

good business executive should be able to dictate a clear, spoken letter that will come out a clear, written one. It should contain no homonyms—words having the same pronunciation but different meaning, like *meet* and *meat*. You will have to learn through experience which words to avoid. Fortunately there aren't too many of these. Some businessmen prefer to use a slightly different pronunciation to distinguish between them, but this is not good practice even if skillfully done, because it is an artificial distortion of the accepted pronunciation. It is better to substitute other words, that cannot be misinterpreted.

To sum up, learn *diction* and *discrimination*.

"How did an Englishman get hold of one of these? Why don't we have a British model, he says." Allen twiddled the letter opener, thinking. "Need at least a dozen adjustments for different accents. How'd you like to go to London, Joe?"

TO ALL salesmen: Don't use the talk-a-type machine when writing a sales letter—but fake it so it looks like talk-a-type. Use your own judgment on this. You won't want anything hard to read or

understand, but the down-to-earth effect of simplified spelling ought to have great appeal—

"I don't care if your father does - spell *bought*, *b-o-t*. That's just a business short-hand and you can't use it in this classroom."

"Johnny, if any more stories come in written on those simple-minded typewriters, just send them back—with a note. I'm not going to even bother reading them."

WELCH looked up impassively as a reporter breezed in and sat on his desk. "Say, Welch, I overheard a new slang word the other day. 'Queep' for *quick sleep*—a knock out punch. Maybe you can use it in your column."

Welch yawned. "I'll make a note of it—though I like to make up my own new words." He picked up a pencil. "How's it spelled?"

"I dunno. I never saw it in print. How would your machine spell it? Here, Bessie, come over here. Queep!"

The columnist shook his head sadly. "He talks to a machine!"

"What's the matter with that? You talk to it all day long. Look, it spells *k-w-y-p*."

The noise of the newspaper

office lessened for a moment, and a voice far away was clearly audible. "Why do we have the dirty work, changing this copy in phony spelling to regular spelling—if we make a mistake we catch heck?"

The *Daily Journal* will begin printing simplified spelling in a small way tomorrow. So as not to annoy the majority of our readers, this novelty will be confined to C. M. Rowley's *Clear English*, and Al Duff's sports column. Mr. Duff is an enthusiast of the Besser contraption, and he says that he never could spell, anyway.

The fads of blue eyebrows, magico games, and simplified spelling will soon pass away—Editorial in the *Messenger-Times*.

"Rowley, here's a letter with a list of funny-looking words in simple spelling. Thought that would belong in your department."

"Oh, swell!" said Rowley gleefully. "I'll answer that with a list twice as long, of funnier-looking 'Ancient English' words."

"Give them the dough, through, rough, cough routine, huh?"

NOTICE to Students: Any students who have talk-a-

type machines at home may use them to do their homework. But his does not mean that talk-a-type spelling is condoned. This is intended solely as a time-saver for the benefit of the students, and should not be construed otherwise by the students or others. (Added scrawl: *This mynz yw!*)

Stratford looked directly at the camera. "No, sir! I still maintain this sound-transcribing typewriter, talk-a-type, fonotype, or whatever you call it, is a bad influence on pronunciation. Its thirty symbols are leveling down the forty-odd shadings of English sound, necessary to cultivated speech, down to a common, barbarous monotony—"

Motley interrupted, "But you agree that simplified spelling itself—?"

Stratford condescended to look at Motley. "Spelling, who cares? Shakespeare never bothered about spelling. But 'speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you'—"

"My boy can read the newspapers but he can't read those school books yet. They ought to make the school board get up to date on such things."

**P**ROFESSOR BROWN took his glasses for the tenth time, looked out at his

audience. "The whole thing boils down to this. In the Middle Ages, the English language changed freely, too freely, in both spelling and pronunciation. Then came printing, and mass education, freezing the words just as they were, inconsistencies and all.

"Since then the pressure has been great to regularize, to make rules where there are no rules, but the continuous inflow of new words from other languages has made the job almost hopeless. Almost hopeless, but not quite. The old saying goes, 'it's always darkest before dawn', or, 'things have got to get worse before they get better'." He put on his glasses again, referred to his notes.

"When you realize your old car has deteriorated to the point where it can't be repaired, you know it's time to junk it, or trade it in for a new one. Experience of the past century has shown us there is no repairing formal English. But there is a new system on the horizon, the informal spelling of Business English, phonetic because it has to be, to satisfy the uncomprehending robot.

"This streamlined orthography is spreading beyond the world of business, and it is meeting and clashing with formal spelling everywhere.

For a while we will have two systems. This won't long be tolerated, so eventually one of them will have to give way." He again took off his glasses. "My friends, you can't beat the machine. It will be present orthodox spelling that will go.

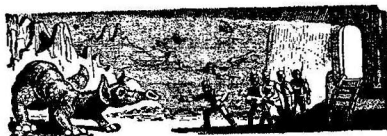
"It'll be replaced by easy-to-read phonetic spelling, not one word at a time, as we all once thought so fondly, but *in its entirety*, as the already full-grown system expands into newer fields." Glasses.

"When the conquest is completed, another long period of linguistic peace will follow. There will be some confusion at first, of course, as after all revolutions, but the ensuing period of quiet will be doubly long. For then we will have not only the retarding effect of the printed word, to resist further change, but the confining power of the sound-writing machine, on both spelling and pronunciation."

ON THIS note of prophecy we leave our story. We hope we have pictured some incidents unknown to you,

perhaps even shown you a new point of view from which to judge events. You may have thought, possibly, that Skagway and Besser labored mightily together to bring this about. Actually, the two never met. Elbert Skagway, of Colleetown, U. S. A., was almost unaware of the existence of the great Otto Besser of Lichen, Germany; and the inventor, in his lifetime, had never heard of Skagway. A dozen others, in between, played their indispensable parts. It has been said that great scientific progress is the result of many individuals' little discoveries reacting upon one another. We have attempted to show, in appropriate atmosphere—the complicated, outworn spelling of the day—that this was indeed the case, in the working out of this long-awaited revolution.... The Authors.

Editor'z Kament—Jany, if eny mor storyz kum in ritn in owld taym spelyng, send them baak, with u nowt.





# THE LAST WORD



## RIPOSTE

Dear Bob:

I was in New York yesterday, and Randall Garrett told me that you were publishing his goddam clever satires of s. f. novels (hurrah for you) and that one of them was "The Caves of Steel". He read me his parody on the phone and of course I split a gut with pleasure, and could hardly wait to get to the typewriter to pound out more of the same.

I enclose a five-verse reply to the boy in what I believe is the same rhyme and rhythm scheme he used, plus a few of his verbal tricks, plus the same "Gunga Din" type climax.

It would pleasure me no end if you could run it along with his parody—either right after it, or in the readers' column, or anywhere else you thought it would fit best.

### IN REPLY TO RANDALL GARRETT

*by Isaac Asimov*

Years ago, I went and wrote "The Caves of Steel",  
All about Lije Bailey and his pal, Daneel,  
I just love the way it goes, love its plot and love its prose—  
Yes, for me the novel has a great appeal.

Now along there comes a crackpot named R. Garrett  
With a head upon his shoulders plus a spare. It  
Peers demurely out his pocket, all a-swivel on its socket.  
Need I mention any more? I couldn't bear it.

So this joker has a parody in verse  
Meant to hit you in the ribs (and swell his purse),  
And, you know, to tell the truth, I admire this gruesome youth  
For his wit and verve and bounce—it could be worse!

What I mean is that I find his humor dandy.  
He's a bright young satirist, a comic, and he  
Should receive a lot of credit. Though it may go to his head, it  
Is important that I say one thing to Randy:

"Though you may not be each person's glass o' tea,  
"Though your version's lots o' you and less o' me,  
"Though the stork should have mislaid you, by the drunken imp  
that made you,  
"You are near as good as I, you S. O. B."

## OBJECTION...

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

I can't understand why you've given space in your magazine to the Randall Garrett "poem" in the January issue of SFS. It seems outrageous to allow a great science fiction novel like "The Demolished Man" to be pulled to pieces publicly in this way. I'll grant Mr. Garrett a certain cleverness of phrase, but the whole spirit of his parody was petty and destructive, and I'll bet you'll get some yelping letters from wounded authors if you keep printing such things.

Science fiction has produced not very many stories of authentic classic stature, and it is, I think, unkind to expose what classics we have to such lampooning.

KENNETH JANSEN,  
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

## ...OVER-RULED

Dear Bob;

Thanks very much for letting me see Mr. Jansen's letter; the man feels that he has a legitimate gripe, and he needs an answer, although I think he is finding trouble where none exists.

In the first place, I would absolutely refuse to parody any work that I didn't really like. In the second, only works of really classic stature can stand up to parody.

When someone lampoons Shakespeare, for instance, I think it would be rather ridiculous for anyone to think it detracted one cubit from the stature of the Bard. Indeed, quite the contrary is true: any writer who finds his work is worthy of being lampooned usually feels flattered.

Finally, let me point out to Mr. Jansen that the authors of the works which are lampooned in my own verse are given copies before

publication. If any of them were to refuse to allow publication, that would be the end of it. So far, I've had good luck; all I've heard were roars of appreciation, which is flattering to the old ego, to say the least.

To further soothe Mr. Jansen's jangled nerves, I am enclosing a letter from Alfred Bester, who showed quite a different reaction to my version of "The Demolished Man" than did Mr. J.

RANDALL GARRETT

Dear Mr. Garrett:

Thank you very much for your brilliant parody, which was read with delight by everybody in this house. It makes me wish that you'd handled the symbol passages in "The Demolished Man" instead of myself. Certainly you invented gimmicks I never dreamed were possible.

If I ever do anything else worthy of parody, don't hesitate to outdo me, and don't fail to send it along for my further entertainment and education.

All my best

ALFRED BESTER

*Everyone satisfied now?*

## TOO FORMAL?

Dear Bob:

Don't mean to sound personal, but why not get off this formal idea of having all letters in "The Last Word" begin with *Dear Editor*. Sounds like you were holding some kind of a forum. Your readers know you; let them call you by your name.

I've been a silent watcher of your magazines for the past few months. Every so often I feel like I have to get in my two cents along with the others. So here goes.

SFS has been steadily improving with the past issues. Both in story and in art work. The only



area I haven't seen much improvement is on the covers. For the size of your magazine, the logo is entirely too big. It doesn't allow for a good cover picture. When there is a good one it is ruined by the title. Can't something be done about this? Something like the last issue of *Future* would work out nicely.

Speaking of *Future*, when can we expect another issue of this mag? The last was full of good material—I certainly hope the other fans feel the same way. I'd like to see it return to a regular publishing schedule.

Naturally I would also like to see you publish more novels like "City Of Glass." Like you say, the critics may have panned it, but the fans said it was good. That is one reason why I don't pay too much attention to what reviewers of SF have to say about any given book. One man's poison . . . as the old saying goes. I don't like to rely to much on others' opinions in matters like these. After all, if we did, the larger majority of the reading public would have done away with science fiction a long time ago.

I will agree with you to a certain extent on the idea that the writers are to blame for the current decline in the popularity of SF. They have been fed a line on what the public wants, which has turned out to be not what they wanted at all. Accordingly, they have written stories to fall into this cycle. Fortunately, they are coming out of this slump at the present time. Through the work of a few good editors, you among them, they have been told to change over to the more favored type of action story. It'll take time to swing the pendulum back to the up stroke. But I feel sure that you editors will see that the swing

doesn't suddenly drop back again.

There has been a lot of criticism on letter columns. I'd like to point out that it was during the time of fewer such columns that SF began to take that downward swing. When people began to realize, through letters, that others felt the same way as they did and began writing letters to the editors SF, stories began to gain more appeal for the average reader. For myself, this is shown in the number of stories I will read in any given magazine. There were many wherein I read only one or two stories. In these same mags, now, I usually read and enjoy the entire contents and wish there were more of the same.

The trouble with the mental type story was that few of us wanted to identify ourselves with characters who were having to undergo mental strain all the time. Some of it was good, but that's all . . . some. After a time it became a bore, and who wants to put out money to be bored.

Glad to see you are swinging back and including the action type of story in your magazines. The more the better.

GUY E. TERWILLEGGER,  
Boise, Idaho.

*As Anna Russell says, too much of anything—even if it is nice—is too much! Several readers have complained about the logo, so we changed it. Better now?*

#### YET TO COME

Dear Editor:

I wonder if you can settle an argument for me. A friend of mine, who has read science fiction longer than I have, doesn't think much of the claims that science fiction authors foresaw the atomic bomb and atomic energy. He admits that a few stories may have come close during the time that

the Bomb was being worked on—there was that episode where the FBI thought there had been a leak somewhere, because current science fiction stories were pretty near the mark—but when I claim that atomic energy was written about decades before, he can't see it. He says that, sure, authors wrote about atomic explosions and bombs and stuff, but no one had any idea of the real problems involved in fission, and no one thought of the radiation dangers much before Heinlein's "Solution, Unsatisfactory". I can't cite any stories, but there were some, weren't there?

WILL DRUCKER,  
Chicago, Ill.

*Your friend is largely correct, but not entirely. One outstanding story dealing with radiation appeared in 1935 and treats with a particularly fascinating and unpleasant possible aspect of radioactive dust. In John Taine's novel, "Twelve Eighty-Seven", the enemy's plot is to develop a super-fertilizer which will be dusted all over the US, the USSR, Canada, and various other countries. The final shipments of dust (improved over the varieties which have already been fantastically successful) are unstable and will break down six months later into a compound which sends out radiations that kill first the bacteria in the soil, then all the life-elements in it, then all the animal and insect life living on it. Taine also describes the radiation sickness (fatal) which afflicts scientists working on the dust, trying to "improve" it so that there won't be any indications of its harmfulness until too late:*

PRO

Dear Mr. Editor:

Unfortunately, much of what

Mr. Barrow has to say of fan letters is true; they should be brief, concise, and to the point.

At least, most of the letters in the November issue show "some semblance of sense and intelligent comment".

ROGER CRENSHAW,  
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Editor:

Lewis Barrow has made some comments in your mag that I feel called upon to answer. First of all I will acknowledge that I might be classified as one of Mr. Barrow's beloved juveniles (I've got six months to go before I can vote). I have contributed to sf letter columns before and I must differ with Mr. Barrow on the importance of the opinions of sf fans if only as a salve to my ego.

You may not know this, Mr. Barrow, but many of the so called "juveniles" that contribute to letter columns may not know more than artists, scientists, etc., but they do know just as much. Furthermore scientists don't even enter into the picture (except for a few isolated cases) we're criticizing the science of the writers. Now in my own case I'm not much of a scientist (I've got 3 1/2 years in chemistry in college); in fact, as far as scientists go, I would probably be classified as mediocre but I feel that if one of the writers makes a mistake and I catch it I should tell him about it. If someone has a spaceship exceed the speed of light, I don't think he should get away with it when anyone who knows simple algebra can prove that it is highly probable that anything exceeding the speed of light would cease to exist. As to knowing more than editors, are you going to say that all editors are perfect, that none can stand a little constructive criticism? Many of the present

editors were editors of fanzines before they went pro, and many of the fan who criticize them have the same background.

Finally, our opinions on sex, religion, philosophy and politics are important. First of all, these opinions provide a stimulating discussion from which all benefit. Secondly you must realize that many of those now classified as "juveniles" are the leaders of tomorrow and as such their opinions are important. Now don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that I'll be a leader of tomorrow; when it gets down to what I'll be, I'll probably wind up in the sanitation dept. of some, hick town in the midwest. But I'm not a good example of the average sf fan.

Now, on to the mag, it's fine as far as I'm concerned. Just perfect. Don't change it.

Enjoyed "Faery Lands Forlorn" very much. Keep up the articles. Few comments I'd like to make on it. At one point in the article, there is speculation as to the explanation of gods. I think I am safe in pointing out that one of the things that sets man off from other animals is curiosity. He naturally gets curious about his presence on earth. The only explanation for this problem, whether he subscribes to evolution or starts with man fully developed, is a God. Furthermore, it builds up man's ego to believe that a divine being created man in His own form. It further builds up his ego to think that God created the other animals and then man. That is, man is the final achievement, the "highest" form of animal. As a parting note may I digress to bemoan the constant use of such phrases as "highest" form and the "lower" animals. More complex might suit to describe man but certainly not "highest". What do you mean "highest"? From the

standpoint of a gorilla, man may not be highest at all!

RUSSELL L. BROWN  
P. S. In the event that you print this, leave off the address.

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

I would like to begin by asking you to please print this letter in the interest of fans, fandom and science-fiction in general. Unless, of course, someone else sends you a better letter saying the same things that I do.

To elaborate on that last sentence, I mean that there are many more qualified to reply to Mr. Lewis Barrow's letter in the November issue of SFS than I am, since I am only a very recent one and just getting started in active fan doings.

Now, I would like to take up the cudgel against Lewis Barrow, professional fan-hater. Actually, I would like to belt Mr. Barrow over the head with that cudgel; but that would be very uncouth and ungentlemanly, wouldn't it, Mr. Barrow? And it would be especially horrendous for such a creature as I—a low, sniveling fan—to do that, wouldn't it.

Now, now, Mr. Barrow. Before you start screaming your neutrality, let me say that I realize that you stated early in your letter that you had nothing against us fans. But that was at the start of your letter, wasn't it? Following that, you went on to heap a veritable avalanche of abuse on we scum of the earth, didn't you?

"Whether they might better spend their time on other activities is not for me to say," you state. No, you didn't say it; but you did a mighty good job of implying just that. Personally, I can think of nothing better to do than be a science-fiction fan. What do you do in your spare time, Mr. Barrow? Do you further the cause



of world peace? Do you contribute great ideas and philosophies to the people of this world? I'd be willing to bet that you don't.

In fact, Mr. Barrow, I'll bet you even have some kind of a hobby. Well, that is what being a science-fiction fan is. And its one of the finest hobbies I know of. For some, even, fandom is a full-time job. For others, fandom is only a small beginning for a great career. Future professional artists, writers and editors gain practice in fanzines. You probably don't know what a fanzine is, do you Mr Barrow? You most likely will not deign to lower yourself so much as to look at one, will you? I, myself, hope one day to become a successful professional writer of science-fiction; and I am being helped to that end by Joe L. Hensley. I am starting out by submitting short fiction to fanzines.

And now that I've mentioned Joe L. Hensley, I'd like to tell you another thing or two. The way you talk of fans in your letter, you probably picture them as a group of giggling children drooling over a brand new toy. I'd like you to know, Mr. Barrow, that Joe L. Hensley (a full-fledged science-fiction fan and part-time author) is an established lawyer. Would you call him a gibbering adolescent, Mr. Barrow? And I am only using him as an example; they are many more like him. Sure, Mr. Barrow, many fans *are* teenagers,

but they aren't typical. No one fan is typical of the rest. A fan is a fan no matter what his age or walk of life. I myself am only just telling you that in case you want to call me an idiotic adolescent in dire need of psychiatric (or is it psycho-analytic? I'm not sure about that either, Mr. Barrow) treatment.

And there is a definite purpose behind these slap-happy "healthy hi-jinks", Mr. Barrow. And just what is that purpose you ask? *It's a hell of a lot of fun*, that's what. Also, many of us feeling we are doing something for science-fiction, furthering it.

You keep repeating, Mr. Barrow, that you have nothing against us fans, then you proceed to stomp us into the ground with seven-league, hob-nailed boots. Your letter was begging brazenly for a reply. And I hope mine is used, Mr. Barrow, because I don't like you. I think that you are typical of many "serious-minded" people who take one look at fans, then mutter, "Negligible, stupid, running off at the mouth," and never stop to consider that we just might be human beings enjoying ourselves. You, Mr. Barrow, sound to me to be very provincial. You must realize that what you like will not always prove to be the norm.

About your "Publicity-seekers" remark. In many cases you are right. I like very much to see my name in print, so do all human beings. You are human aren't you, Mr. Barrow? I'll bet even such a very, very modest person as you smiled a little proudly to yourself when you saw your name there at the bottom of the letter.

We fans discuss sex and other topics that you mention because they are interesting to us and we realize that everyone else's opinion is not identical with ours. We

like to see what other people think about the world in general.

You also say that you and other faithful readers do not want to be contaminated by us slimy monsters. I would very much like to ask you a question now, Mr. Barrow, so I will: *What is a faithful reader?* Is it someone who buys every issue of a certain magazine? Maybe so, Mr. Barrow, but it is also something else. It is someone who writes letters to an editor—whether they are printed or not—and tells that editor what he thinks of his magazine. For these criticisms by his readers help an editor to round his book into a more complete and satisfactory product for the paying customer. On the other hand, a faithful Science-Fiction Fan buys every magazine he can lay his “childish” fingers on, or as much as his financial standing will allow him to.

A science-fiction fan publishes his own fanzine. He writes for the many fanzines available. He corresponds with other fans. He writes “immature” letters to letter columns, where he can sound off and have other fans talk right back at him. You, Mr. Barrow, as an “occasional reader of science-fiction” can read the fiction. You don’t have to read the letter columns if you don’t want to. Nobody is twisting your arm, on which you are wearing your stuffed-shirt.

I hope this “gush and guff” of mine is printed, because as I said before, I like to see my name in print. But that doesn’t mean as much to me as the fact that you seem to need to learn a thing or two; about people in general, and s-f fans in particular.

Mr. Barrow, I’ll bet you haven’t got the intestinal fortitude—in other words: guts—to answer this (what probably seems to you

childish, immature, and silly) letter; either via this letter column or personally.

Mr. Barrow, this may seem horribly disgusting to you, but I like arguments via mail. I like any kind of correspondence. In fact, I’ll correspond with any one who wants to write me, especially *Science Fiction Fans*.

You see, Mr. Barrow, I’m not afraid to have my address printed. Because if anybody wants to dispute what I say, I’m all for it. I don’t consider myself infallible or omnipotent. I’m only a plain, ordinary, everyday person. What are you, Mr. Barrow?

Right now, Mr. Barrow, you are probably saying to yourself: “Why the nerve of that ignorant imbecile! Does he think that I would degrade myself so far as to actually *argue* with him?” By now, Mr. Barrow, you probably get a bad taste in your mouth when you are forced to utter the word “fan”. I can’t say that I’m sorry, Mr. Barrow. I just had to do this. Whenever some one talks about fans the way you did I see red and every other color of the spectrum, and I just can’t remain silent.

Well, I guess I’ll climb off my battered little soap box now. I just wanted to get this off my chest and now that I have I feel a little better. But you know what? I *still* don’t like Mr. Lewis Barrow.

To close, I would like to thank you, Mr. Lowndes, for editing three fine science-fiction magazines, and would like to wish you many more issues. Looks like this letter is kind of long doesn’t it? Oh, well... Maybe you can run it as a serial...

RON FRAZIER,  
Richmond, California.

*Advance proofs of the letter section are being forwarded to Mr.*

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Science Fiction Stories published bi-monthly at Holyoke, Mass. for October 1, 1955.

1. The names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, Louis H. Silberkleit, 241 Church St., New York 13, N. Y. Editor, Robert W. Lowndes, 241 Church St., New York 13, N. Y. Managing editor, Robert W. Lowndes, 241 Church St., New York 13, N. Y. Business manager, Maurice Coyne, 241 Church St., New York 13, N. Y.

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LOUIS H. SILBERKLEIT  
(Signature of publisher)

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 14th day of October, 1955.

(My commission expires March 30, 1956.)

MAURICE COYNE

Notary Public, State of New York  
No. 5844500

Qualified in Bronx Co.  
Cert. Filed in New York County  
Commission expires March 30, 1956

*Barrow, who, we presume, can handle his own defense.*

### ONLY FAIR

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

A big cheer for your editorial, "Motive And Cue", in the November issue of SFS; it's about time someone did a little research on what makes the stf writer tick. I've believed for some time that writers of science-fiction are an altogether different race from so-called "main-line" authors, and it would appear now that at least one other person agrees with me. I look forward with great interest to future articles in this series.

The rest of the issue, while not quite as good as the last two, shows that you have some very definite ideas about what constitutes a good magazine, and that most of them are very good. For one thing, a number of young authors are appearing in your mags, all the while being balanced by mellow oldtimers such as Simmak, DeCamp, and Winterbotham. This system has worked very well

for you in the issues I've seen so far.

With only one poor story in the current offering, ("The Idealists" by Morton Klass), and an interesting article to take up the slack, SFS cannot be knocked to any great extent. Damon Knight's excellent book reviews, although due back next time, leave a big gap with their absence, but the up-an'-coming letter division shows promise. In other words, the good just about counter-balances the bad, and SFS emerges as a pretty fair zine.

My best wishes to you and Columbia for continued success in the stf field, and perhaps I'll be seeing you monthly soon. (Hope so!)

KENN CURTIS,  
Cincinnati, Ohio

*I think the most important aspects of what makes science fiction writers tick should be the same as for main-line writers. So far, there has been an over-concentration on the differences—important as they are.*

## Readin' & Writhin' (Cont'd From Page 116)

insistent on thinking of time as *both* fixed and plastic, trundles you over a whole series of jarring incongruities. What saves the story, barely, are the characters and the thoughtful, compassionate mood. The story does not make a nickel's worth of sense, but it means something.

In sum: Oliver's talent here shows itself as an even more impressive thing than it seemed in his first novel. At his best, as in six of these seven stories, Oliver has the kind of gift this field most sorely lacks—the ability to touch the heart

of the human problem.

ISAAC ASIMOV'S "The End Of Eternity" (Doubleday, \$2.95) is a curious patchwork, containing some monumentally good ideas and some startlingly uneven writing. In contrast to the intensely human pioneers of his "The Martian Way," Asimov's present characters are gadgeted and double-talked almost out of existence: Twissell, the most readily visible character in the book, is little more than a collection of mannerisms; Harlan, the hero, is not even that.



The book has one more serious handicap, for which Asimov is to blame as much, or as little, as the rest of us.

The background is extremely complex, involving a race of Eternals with a self-appointed mission to doctor reality all up and down the time-line—with a technology, mores, anxieties, a world-view and a terminology to fit—none of which the reader has a fair chance to absorb before he is flung into the story proper.

This abrupt plunge into the action, though sanctioned by common practice, makes the first few chapters of the story perfectly unintelligible. What is all this blurred talk about Eternity and Time, Observers, Eternals, Reality Changes? Who is the girl with the funny name that the hero gets all tense about every now and then? The writer offers you no signposts; you have to pick your way as best you can, in the hope—justified, but after what effort!—that it will all become clear in time.

Once this barrier is passed, how-

ever, Asimov's story is fascinating. It has all the time-long sweep and mystery of Jack Williamson's creaky old "Legion of Time," plus an incisive logic that Williamson never had—and an occasional insight that's rare even in Asimov. Harlan's reaction when, by mistake, he all but meets himself, illuminates the doppelganger legend and the time-travel canon together, in one brilliant flash of subliminal understanding. Plot and counterplot, in the best Williamson fashion, wind up spectacularly together, and there's a very acceptable happy ending.

This may be one of the last books of its kind. Science fiction is, pretty plainly, swinging away from its complex, cerebral, heavy-science-plus-action phase, toward a more balanced and easily digestible mixture of technology and human emotion. Only a writer trained in the days when s-f was still a species of adventure pulp could write a novel like this one; and Asimov, whom I persist in thinking of as a rising young writer, is now one of the last of the Old Guard.

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# The Pedagogical Question

(Continued From Page 1)

fore going into his extrapolations, another question arises: how is the lay reader going to know exactly where the line should be drawn between science and science fiction in this story? Story-writing has long outgrown the point where the author can stop the story-line in order to explain to the reader that here is the point where we go into speculation and fantasy. The only readers who will be able to know what not to take as pedagogy will be those who already know the science that the author was trying to teach.

This doesn't apply to most interplanetary stories, time-travel stories, tales of the far future, etc., where it is obvious that the marvels depicted are fantasy.

Someone suggested once that the straight-science sections of science fiction could be printed in a different type-face than that employed through the rest of the story, so the reader could be sure. (If this were done, there wouldn't be very much work for the compositors who had to set up these special type-faces, not in contemporary science fiction!) I couldn't think of a better scheme for limiting the audience—outside of continuing to present it with most of what has been

passing as science fiction in the past few years. Most people not only do *not* read fiction for educational purposes, but they don't *want* to be told that they're going to be taught something. They'll accept and absorb pedagogy as a by-product of fiction-reading—and if the author is adroit enough, they may accept and absorb a great deal more than many fiction-producers would give them credit for. But, irrespective of the fact that one man's acceptance-level of entertainment may go a great deal higher than another's (to the extent that some people can and do read "Finnegans Wake" or Ezra Pound's "Cantos", for example, for sheer relaxation and enjoyment) the odds are that most readers won't choose a story which states overtly that the author is out to instruct them in anything whatsoever.

**T**HIS FACT leads to the other extreme—the viewpoint that science fiction (or any other kind of fiction, for that matter) must not, if it is going to be popular, contain *anything* that might possibly instruct a reader, or lead him to think or feel differently than he did before reading the story. And

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the limitations are set at the lowest possible order of literacy, on the theory that this insures the widest possible circulation. (Some of the "take - the - science - out - of - science - fiction" boys wanted to replace the science with literature, but the main effect of the drive was in the direction of luring eight-year-old adults from their tv giveaway shows long enough to read space-drivel out of which everything was filtered which editors and publishers thought the readers wouldn't understand, or wouldn't care to try to understand.)

However, there is a wide difference between imparting scientific facts and teaching science; and if there has ever been any story which imparted enough of any *system of facts* and the implications, etc., to be derived from them (which constitutes a "science"), I have yet to see it. The most that science fiction can achieve pedagogically speaking is to *arouse an interest in the reader* in the subject under discussion and to propagandize what is known as the "scientific method" of thinking.

Again, these objectives, if we

can consider them as legitimate objectives in science fiction, can be attained only as a by-product; otherwise, we have an article, or a tract, thinly disguised in narrative form—which may be an effective way to illustrate a particular scientific point, but which still is not "teaching science" except in a very limited manner. The question remains as to whether even these objectives can be considered legitimate for science fiction.

AT THIS point we come across a phenomenon which has been encountered in numerous other types of fiction, and that is the idea of any particular genre in fiction having any over-all *purpose*, which can be, or ought to be taken as part of standards of excellence. Wherever any single over-all "purpose" has been adopted for fiction, the results have been generally unsatisfactory at best. (The requirements of Soviet literature—socialist realism—are only one example of the stagnation and degeneration that results from mandatory purpose in fiction.) An *individual author* may have a single over-riding purpose

—or mission, or message, as it is commonly put—but if he produces worthwhile work with it, it will be inimitable.

Now, as we stated above, narrative can be used effectively in illustrating certain aspects of certain types of teaching, and it isn't impossible for some such narratives to be good stories, in their own right. Unfortunately, the better the fiction, the more the reader will be distracted from the pedagogy (without an instructor to underline the points), and you can't expect very much to stick in most readers' minds.

What can be achieved in science fiction, then, is what can be achieved in any other type of fiction—the general and not-too-specific aim of *making the reader think*. (Which Pound claimed was Dante's purpose in writing the "Divine Comedy".) I say "not too specific" because, even where the story makes the reader think, there's no way of telling what the story will make any particular reader think about; nor can the direction of the reader's thinking be predicted. Since none of us are *entirely* dissimilar, it follows that some readers will have been enough like the author so that they will think just about the way he did, and if his story is new to them, he will have made them think in a new way, and along the lines he leads them. But the odds are just as great that any given reader may think something different and derive points and conclusions that the author never

expected or intended. (To draw an example from non-fiction, Machiavelli wrote "The Prince" as a study of how people and rulers have actually behaved, as opposed to what they have said about how they behaved, etc. He neither expected nor intended the use of his study as a handbook for tyrants.)

**I**DEALLY speaking, any worthwhile example of science fiction should stimulate thought in the reader; should illuminate some aspect or aspects of science; should explore human behaviour in the light of scientific possibilities not yet attained—but not to the exclusion of, or at the expense of, other values in fiction. One flaw in many works of science fiction, where the science has been treated adequately, has been the single-mindedness that treats science as if it were the prime (and sometimes the only) value in human existence. This is a kind of totalitarian attitude, the fallacy of which would be apparent were any other single human value, or ideal, or notion substituted for it.

Any work of fiction which has literary value (and which, therefore, cannot only take but demands several readings) contains pedagogical values, the exact extent of which cannot be determined. And science fiction cannot hope to attain the stature of "good", let alone "classic" literature until it has achieved the catholicity of literature. R.W.L.



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