

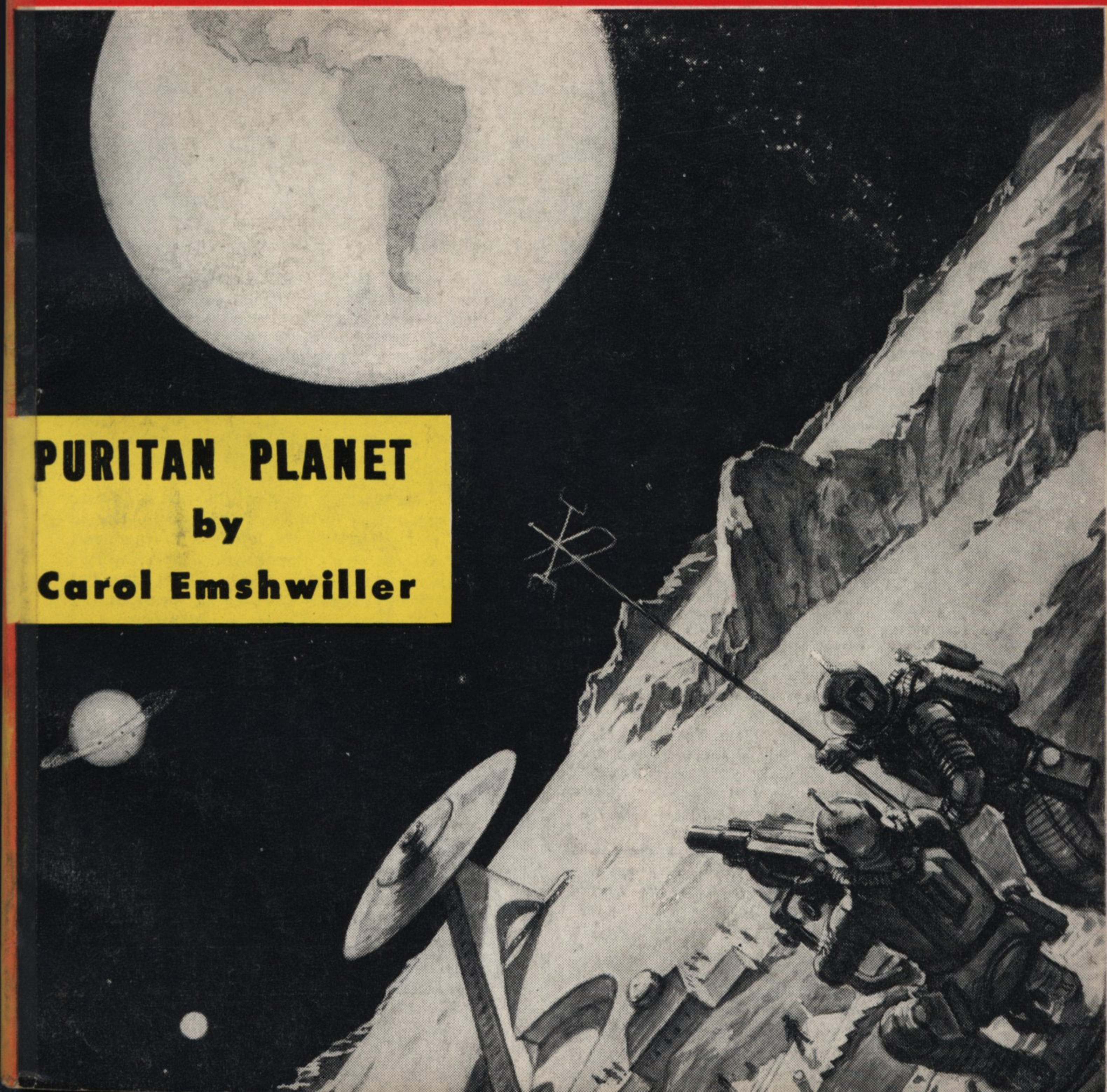
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**JAN. 1960**

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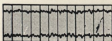


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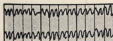
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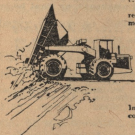
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VOLUME 10

JANUARY, 1960

NUMBER 6

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Editor: ROBERT A. W. LOWNDES

MARIE A. PARK, Asso. Ed.

DOROTHY B. SEADOR, Asso. Ed.

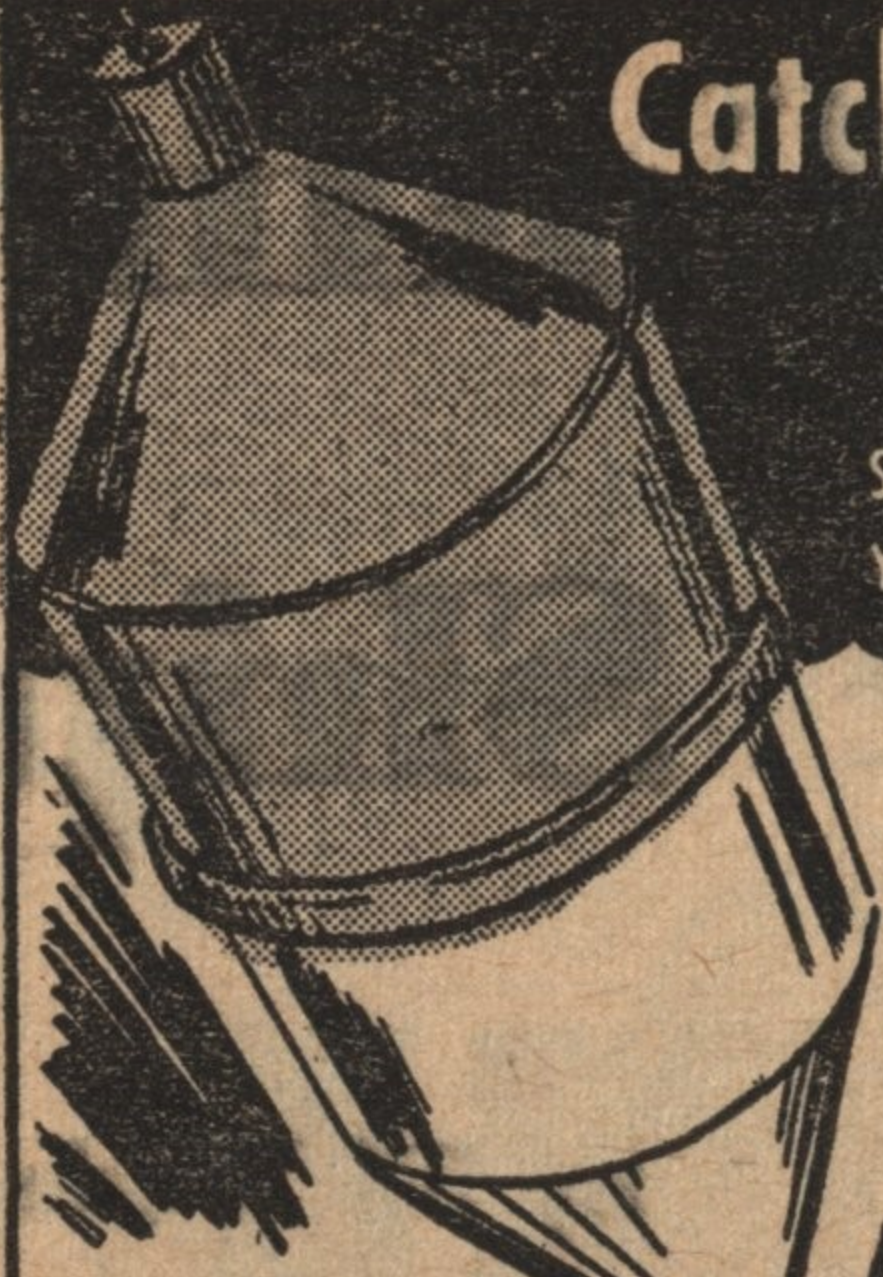
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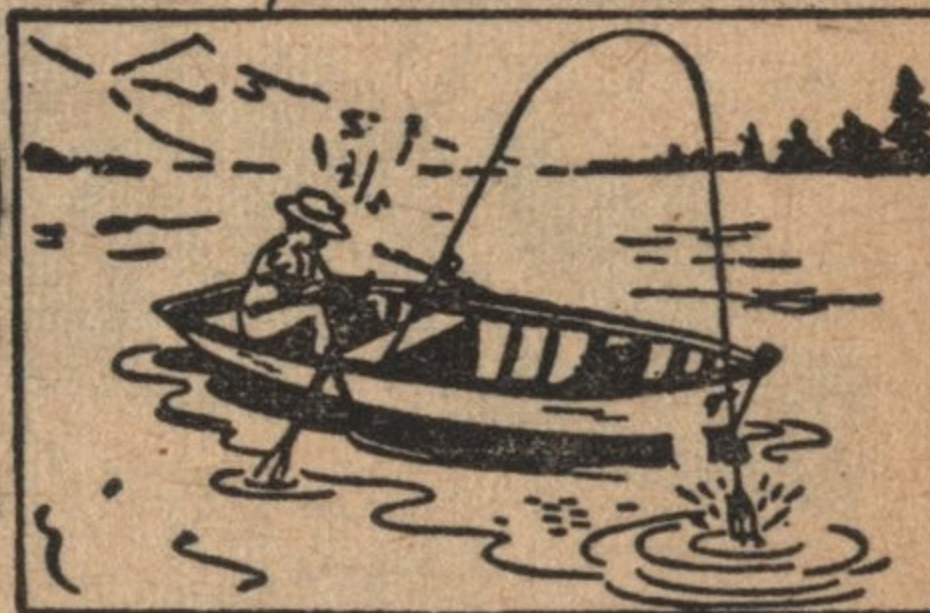


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# The Coffin Ship

by Bill Wesley

illustrated by Emsh

*Cy Munson was a lone man awake on a star-ship where everyone else slept. Why had he awakened? And if someone had had to awaken, why did it have to be the one person who knew nothing about the ship, and had no idea of what he was supposed to do?*

CY MUNSON'S first awareness was of a faint whirring sound coming through miles and miles of cotton. He struggled to dissolve the cotton, then there was nothing but space—limitless black space, and the whirring sound coming from somewhere beyond. He sent out long tentacles, searching, listening, feeling. Nothing but space. He pulled them in, sent them out in other directions. Nothing but space. Space and the whirring sound. Nothing else? Yes.



Were the other sleepers about to awake?





There was something. A faint light, like a distant star. He sent a tentacle toward the star. It was spinning, blinking—like a sun with one black side, rotating. It grew larger. He drew in his tentacles. He could see it clearly now. It wasn't a sun. It was a light. A yellow, blinking light; and it was right over his chest.

He closed his eyes tightly, then opened them again, concentrating on the light. It stopped blinking and he saw that it was a push button. Under it was a printed sign. Munson strained his eyes, his brain, and slowly read the words, *Push this button immediately on awakening.*

He tried to flex his fingers. They seemed lifeless, as did his arms. He twisted his body to see he was free. He felt nothing—no bonds, no clamps... He forced his fingers to move—only a little at first, then more as his blood circulation picked up. Slowly he bent his arm at the elbow and placed his index finger on the yellow button. Then, summoning all his strength, he pushed.

A softer, brighter light came on all around him and the yel-

low light went off. He saw other push buttons, and other printed signs; and he saw the walls of the "coffin".

**H**E MOVED his head from side to side, checking his physical coordination and looking for the source of the whirring sound. A faint breeze stirred against his cheek; it came from a vented opening beside him. The whirring was the sound of an air conditioner. Slowly, and with great effort, Cy Munson read the other printed signs.

*Lie still until you feel strength in your muscles. Talk to yourself if you like. Try not to sneeze or cough.*

*Regulate temperature with this dial.*

*Do not become impatient. Automatic controls have already been triggered. If you are the first to awaken there will be a delay of fifteen minutes while the outside chamber is brought up to living conditions. You will be released automatically when it is safe.*

*This is a third level compartment. When released, you will find yourself four feet*



*above the floor. Watch your step.*

*Emergency button. Depress only if you feel extreme discomfort, or if thirty minutes has elapsed since pressing yellow button.*

Thirty minutes? How would he know? He had no watch. Was he supposed to count? He could hardly think; where the devil was he anyway?

Vaguely Munson remembered climbing aboard the spaceship. He remembered the crowd, waving—the television cameras—“Old Beanpole” Simpson smiling at him from the speakers’ platform...

**G**RADUALLY, memory came to him, then realization. He was in a spaceship bound for—bound for where? What the dickens was the name of the place? Capella. That was it. Supposed to be like the sun—and with planets, the scientists said, at least three, maybe more. And it was going to take sixty years to get there; that explained the suspended animation. But why Cy Munson? He was no scientist; he had even had a rough time

with Physics 1A while squeezing through NU on his football scholarship. How the devil had he gotten mixed up in such a deal?

Then he remembered Simpson again, the managing editor of the Chicago *Planet*—remembered the day he had gone ranting through the city room shouting, “A million bucks down the drain. A million bucks we bid for an exclusive, and not a single reporter passes the physical. What a bunch of soft-bellied, whiskey-guzzling, night-owling...” He had stopped when his gaze had lit on Cy. “You there,” he had shouted, letting his eyes wander over Cy’s thick muscles and clean, tight skin. “What do you do? What’s your name?”

Cy told him. “Munson, sir. I work in circulation.”

“Ever do any reporting? Don’t answer. Neither has anyone else for the past fifty years. Get over to the Space Force Development Center and tell ‘em you’re from the Chicago *Planet*. And pass that physical or you’ll never work another day on this paper, or any other paper.”



WELL, THAT was how he happened to be on the ship; he remembered that much. And he remembered the shot in the arm before being laid to rest in the "coffin"—but what had happened to the sixty years? It couldn't have... Why, it had only been a minute! Like a Sunday afternoon nap, after reading the comics. If that was all there was to it...

He glanced around the tight little compartment curiously, looking for some indication of time. He didn't know what. A calendar wouldn't do any good, unless it was some kind of automatic thing...

His eye caught a moving dial. A clock—with a minute hand and a second hand. Four and a half minutes, it read—the elapsed time since he had pushed the yellow button, he guessed. If so, he was in for a long fifteen minutes...

Sixty years, just like that! Munson tried to snap his fingers. Didn't do too well. Monk, and Johnny, and "Greased" Granson, all the rest of them—eighty, eighty-five years old already, back there on Earth. Some of them dead probably.

His mother and father for sure. How about Laurie? No, that was impossible. Funny little Laurie, with the cute nose, and that pert little body—she couldn't be eighty years old. She'd never be eighty years old. What a stupid nightmare...

He tried not to think of his parents, though both of them had urged him to go. "It's as much your job as anyone's," his father had told him. "It isn't easy to understand why these things are important, but Man has to keep going, keep doing, keep learning. The last man in the universe will die wondering what to do next I guess."

His mother had simply said, "Good luck, son. Try to remember at least some of the things we taught you."

And Laurie? How had Laurie taken it? She hadn't believed a word of it. "Well, go on," she had said gaily, wrinkling her nose at him. "But when you get tired dating those two-headed, furry-skinned Capelans, or whatever they are, don't come dialing my phone number again. I'm not playing second fiddle to some alien Ubangi."



SIX AND a half minutes!

"Oh, that crazy clock can't be right."

Cy Munson's voice sounded strange—thin, as if it weren't all there. He tried again. "Damn Old Beanpole," he shouted.

That was better. Had a ring to it. Made him feel good too.

"Say, maybe I will be the first guy awake. Should have had a pool on it. Ten bucks each. Eighteen guys—that'd be... Make it a hundred each. Eighteen hundred bucks. Wow! Have a deal at Vegas on that..."

What would it really be like, he wondered? Would they actually find a planet to land on? Something like Earth? With land and water—and animals—and people? Oh, that was ridiculous! He didn't know why it was ridiculous; it just was. Capella was a star. Even if it had planets, they'd be way up in the sky. How the devil could there be people and animals and trees and things way up in the sky? It just didn't make sense. Probably find... What the dickens would they find?

He hadn't the faintest idea.

One look at the Astronomy 1 textbook and he had beaten a line for Jazz Appreciation. Three units was three units. Anyway the astronomy class had met too early in the morning, and they had scheduled some overnight field trips—one of them for the weekend of the Notre Dame game. Wow! Wouldn't that have been something? How come you didn't play in the Notre Dame game, Munson? I was out looking at stars...

NINE minutes!

He twisted his head around to see if there were any signs he had missed. "Ought to have a Coke machine in here," he mused aloud. Then he said, "Hey, I'm hungry. Feel like I haven't eaten for a week."

He wondered what Earth would be like when they returned. One hundred and twenty years—and six months. Six months in the Capella System—one hundred and twenty years commuting. That ought to be a record... Wow! What if we do find people there? Humans. Guys like me—and a gal like Laurie. Munson squirmed.



No, he'd never find another one like Laurie. Not on a stupid yellow star. He didn't have to be an astronomer to know that much.

Eleven minutes!

He *was* going to be first, unless somebody made it in the next two or three minutes. Ought to be a special prize for the first guy awake. Extra glass of champagne, at least. That was the last thing he remembered before being shoved into the "coffin". "Champagne and caviar on Capella III when we wake up," Captain Halloran had said. "Goat's milk, you mean," someone else had said. Everyone except Cy had laughed at that. If it was a joke he had missed it. Those scientists and space force boys had their own brand of humor...

**T**HIRTEEN minutes!

He hoped his typewriter was okay. It had better be. Old Beanpole would give him... He caught his breath. Old Beanpole Simpson was dead. Long dead. Thirty or forty years dead.

Cy felt a lump in his throat without understanding why. He

hadn't even liked the guy. Domineering old bastard. "Go?" he had shouted. "Of course you'll go. The reputation of this paper depends on your going. You represent a million dollar investment. Do you know how many words Shakespeare would have had to write to make a million dollars? Don't answer. I know: 'Who's Shakespeare?' Just write what you see—and what you feel. Don't lie. Don't exaggerate. Don't let any man in the world—not any creature in the universe—tell you what to write."

That was Old Beanpole, and Simpson had known that he would never read a word of it. Never know if it was written—or how it was written—or if there would be anything to write.

"I take it back, Old Beanpole," he said aloud. "You were quite a guy."

He counted the last minute aloud, holding his breath at the end, listening, waiting. Nothing happened.

He squirmed, looked around at the signs again. *Emergency button. Depress only if you feel*



*extreme discomfort, or if thirty minutes has elapsed...*

Thirty minutes? Another fifteen minutes? Just lying there? Wondering? Thinking? Remembering? He'd never make it. What the devil was the matter with those scientists? They were supposed to be smart...

He began to feel uneasy. What if something had happened to the ship? Hit by a meteor maybe. One of the astronomers had mentioned that. What if he was alone in space? Torn loose from the ship by an explosion of some sort. Just him and his coffin—waiting sixty years for nothing. Oh, that was impossible! The mechanism would have been wrecked; he wouldn't have awakened at all. Still, something might have...

He heard a click. Then another click. Then a new whirring sound—stronger than the fan. A motor, pulling. A new breeze swept across Munson's forehead. The signs over his chest began moving toward his feet. No; he was doing the moving. The coffin was sliding out. It had worked. After sixty years, it had worked. He was awake and he was free.

Free somewhere way up in the sky on a stupid yellow star...

HIS FIRST thought after jumping down from the "coffin" was that something had gone wrong after all. The room was completely unfamiliar. It was larger than he remembered, and it was totally enclosed. He remembered windows—large, clear windows, through which he had watched the crowds, and had seen Old Beanpole, and the buildings of the spaceport in the distance, and beyond them the white-caps breaking along the Florida coast. Now there were only the solid walls of the spaceship.

Maybe it was the pilot room he was thinking of...

He ran to see, bounding high in the air because of the low gravity. He had forgotten about that. Someone had tried to explain it to him before blast-off. The ship would be made to rotate, to effect an artificial gravity, but it would only be about one-fourth normal Earth gravity. Now Munson felt foolish, flailing his arms and legs in the air, waiting impatiently to come down before taking the next step.



No, the pilot room was bare too, except for the master panel set against one wall. For an instant he almost went into a panic. He was positive that there had been windows, and more than one panel, and furniture...

He spun around desperately. A new thought had worked its way into his brain and he felt goosepimples gathering on his skin. Where were the other crew members? Surely some of them should have awakened by this time...

HE WENT hopping back into the morgue, as the space force boys had labeled it with such malicious pleasure, cursing the delay caused by his grotesque steps, having forgotten again about the low force of gravity.

The coffins were just as he had left them—closed up tight, all except his own.

He searched the room for directions—more printed signs, or an instruction manual. Something, for God's sake...

The front of each coffin carried two meters and a dial. The meters were marked *Pulse*

*Rate* and *Body Temperature*. The dials were simply marked *Index*. All the meters read zero. The dial settings ranged from three to seventeen, on a scale of twenty-five. Munson had no idea what "index" they referred to, but he knew what zero pulse rate and zero body temperature meant. They meant that no one else on the ship was showing the slightest tendency to awaken...

He groped his way back to the pilot room and started reading the markings under the meters and switches on the master panel.

*Polar Coordinates, Earth's Perihelion.*

It didn't mean a thing to him.

*Earth Distance, L. Y.*

What was L. Y? Whatever it was, there were five of them back to Earth.

*Course Velocity.*

The dial went to a hundred; the needle pointed to ninety-five. He didn't learn anything from that.

*Polar Velocity.*

Same sort of dial. It read seventy-eight.

*Viewscreens.*



AT LAST. There was one that Cy Munson could understand. There were three switches. *Course. Destination. Earth.*

He flipped the switch marked *Earth*, then held his breath.

A large square of light appeared on one wall and shadows began dancing over the area. After a moment, the shadows stabilized and he saw a patch of starry sky; nothing more. No Earth. No Sun—unless one of the bright stars was the sun; he had no way of knowing. Apparently they were too far away to see Earth. Well, of course! He should have guessed that. They couldn't see any of Capella's planets from Earth, could they?

Eagerly he flipped the switch marked "Destination." Another patch of light appeared. Again he held his breath while the picture formed. He had learned one thing, and he felt better for it. The windows he had remembered had been the television screens...

The streaks and shadows on the second screen stabilized and again he saw only a starry

field. He glanced back and forth from one screen to the other. The stars were in different places. More bright ones on the second screen, Munson thought; otherwise they were identical, for all that he could see. Then where was the one they were shooting at? That Capella? Why wasn't it blazing big and bright? And where were its three planets?

SLOWLY the realization of what had happened worked its way into his brain and he felt a shudder run up his spine. Something had caused him to awaken prematurely; he was alone in space—trillions of miles from nowhere. He didn't know how to awaken the others, and he didn't know how to get back to sleep himself. Munson was trapped—trapped and lost and scared.

Cy didn't know how long he roamed about the ship looking for some clue, some instructions, some hope. He only knew that it had seemed like days and that he found nothing—nothing, that is, that would help him out of his predicament. He found a great many things, and he learned quite a



lot about the ship, but he was just as much lost as before. More so, perhaps, because now he was sure of it.

Munson found the other panels that he remembered. He brought them out of hiding by flipping switches on the master panel, the same way he had found the television screens. But the auxiliary panels only referred to external controls—radar, radio, and flight control of the ship in atmosphere. They didn't show him what he really needed.

He found relays on the master panel that would cut off the ship's oxygen pump, and other relays that would cut off the power generators. These, he assumed, had been closed automatically when he had awakened.

He found a bank of eighteen switches marked "*Subliminal Excitation*", but he didn't know what it meant and he didn't feel that he had the right to experiment. What if he caused the ship to deviate from its prescribed course? In sixty years, or however much time was left, the ship might become hopelessly lost in space.

HE FOUND food. Crates and crates of rations—all clearly marked as to which meal was inside and how many servings. There appeared to be a hundred percent surplus over what the crew would expect to use in the six months on Capella III, or wherever they landed. That meant that he had a nine year supply without touching the basic ration.

He had no way of judging the water supply; the tanks were concealed in some other part of the ship. He could only guess that the water supply would match the food supply; anything else would be unrealistic.

He had no way of guessing at the oxygen supply either, or at the heating and lighting potential. It worried him that each hour he spent in deliberation of what to do he might be cutting off valuable "living time" for the other seventeen men aboard.

Cy Munson felt that he had gone over the ship meticulously at least a hundred times, but his common sense told him that it had probably been closer to a dozen. He found no instructions for waking a man in sus-



pendent animation. He found no switches or dials or relays marked in any way to give him a clue. He hadn't even found a dictionary to help him decipher the markings that he didn't understand.

**H**E FOUND two things that were *not* helpful. One was a sign over the bank of coffins in the "morgue" which read, *It is a capital offense for anyone to touch these index dials without explicit authorization from the ship's commander.*

The other thing he found was a growing feeling inside him that he had no moral right to try to awaken anyone else. Suppose he was able to stir up some sort of response inside one of the coffins—he still might not be able to get it open. Or what if he got it open and the man died instead of awakening? Or what if he awoke and knew no more about what to do than Cy did? Then there would be two of them and Cy Munson would be the same as a murderer...

On the other hand, he might be committing murder anyway, he told himself, if he was using up too much oxygen. He

had to do something, and he had to do it quick. It was last down, two seconds to play, and the ball was somewhere out in the middle of the field...

**H**E MADE one last tour of the ship—the most exhaustive search he had ever made in his life. He remembered the time he had lost a new handball that someone had given him on his tenth birthday. After looking for it hurriedly all over his grandmother's garden, and trampling her flowers and weeds indiscriminately, he had then started over again, painstakingly parting each pair of stems, lifting each leaf, straightening each blade of grass. Still he had not found the handball. He remembered that his feeling of loss had not been as great as his feeling of wonder that the handball could have escaped him. That was the way he felt now. There *had* to be a solution. There absolutely *had* to be. Even the handball, he remembered, had turned up weeks later stuck in a gopher hole. *Somewhere on this ship there's a gopher hole*, he told himself over and over again.



But...he still didn't find it.

He found the medical supplies, and the hypodermic needles with which to administer the drugs, or whatever it was that they had shot into his arm. He supposed that the drug itself was somewhere there in one of the bottles, or in several of them, waiting to be mixed. It might as well have been buried in a salt mine in Siberia, for the good it would do him.

He found a safe with a combination dial that he spent hours trying to solve, but with no success.

He found a log of the ship's activities, but there had been no entries since a few hours after blast-off. That took away his last hope. He had wondered if various crew members, or the captain maybe, were aroused periodically to examine the ship during flight. Apparently not.

Munson sat down on one of the contour chairs that he had discovered folded into a compartment and fought desperately with his emotions. He was past fear now, but he was completely disgusted with himself for not having taken more in-

terest in the ship, for not having asked more questions, for not having been bright enough to understand what they had told him.

**A**T LAST the solution came to him. He fought it back as long as possible; it wasn't his fault, Munson kept telling himself. Those damn scientists! They were supposed to be smart...

Finally he couldn't postpone it any longer; he knew what he had to do. He couldn't use up any more of the ship's oxygen, nor any more of its electrical power. And he couldn't die in the ship—that would be a horrible awakening for the others, his decomposed body... He went to the cabinet where he had found the spacesuits and chose one marked *Large*. He began studying it. After a while he was ready to try it on. He experimented with the oxygen supply, made sure he could control it. He examined the ship's air lock for the twentieth time, satisfied himself that he knew how to operate it. Then he went around the ship returning everything to normal. He opened the oxygen relay,



cut off the power generator, deactivated the television screens, replaced the auxiliary panels and what few pieces of furniture he had used—at last he was ready. He took one last look around, then started for the air lock...

Only then did he begin to imagine the horror that awaited him. What would it be like? What would he feel, drifting out away from the ship? Would he go mad? Would he live long enough to die of hunger, or thirst; or would he suffocate as his oxygen supply diminished?

Without admitting to himself just what his intentions were, he went back to the medical cabinet and took out a bottle of chloroform. He had already noticed the spare connection on his space helmet, and had remembered what the fitting on the chloroform bottle looked like. He had guessed right—it fit.

"Probably so, anybody hurt out in space can be put to sleep on the way to the aid station," he mused aloud. Then to himself Cy Munson added, *well, this is going to be a long sleep...*

CAPTAIN Jim Halloran gradually became aware of the yellow light blinking over his chest. Then he saw the red *Emergency* light blinking too. He struggled with his drug-induced lethargy and finally overcame it to the point where he was able to raise his forearm and press the button.

During the thirty seconds while the outside chamber was being blasted with the full force of the heat engines and the oxygen pumps, he tried to shake the cobwebs from his brain.

An emergency could mean any of a number of things. Some vital part of the ship could have been damaged; a short-circuit could have caused a rocket to fire, resulting in an alteration of course. A *Stop Order* or *Change Order* could have been received by the automatic radio receiver. Even an invasion by an alien force was not impossible. Any creature coming in through the air lock would set off the ship's alarm.

When his coffin slid out, Halloran was ready. He rolled to the floor, one hand hovering over his flame pistol, his eyes



searching the morgue for some hint of trouble.

He saw nothing unusual, he heard nothing unusual—and that wasn't right. He should at least have heard the whining of the heat engines as they worked at twenty percent overload to warm up the ship. And he should have sensed the low atmospheric pressure as the oxygen unit strained to bring the chamber up to normal in one minute instead of the usual fifteen.

**C**AUTIOUSLY, but quickly, he made his way toward the pilot room. Either someone—or *something*—had awakened and started up the engines; or some accident had caused them to start up by themselves. Very likely it was the latter, he thought, because just bringing the ship's interior up to normal Earth conditions would not, of itself, constitute an emergency.

He found nothing wrong in the pilot room. The heat engine and oxygen pump were making some extra noise, as if they were slightly overloaded, but not much.

Halloran felt a chill run up his spine. Someone had been

in the ship within the past few minutes. Someone had warmed it up, opened the oxygen valve, then turned everything off again. That was the only explanation, and whoever it had been, he was gone—otherwise he wouldn't have turned everything off. And it couldn't have been an alien, or the emergency relay would have been tripped when he had first come in through the air lock. *Someone on the ship had just left through the air lock!*

He glided back to the morgue, glanced quickly at the meters until he came to Cy Munson's coffin. The needles of both meters were just settling back to zero.

Halloran grabbed the coffin's handles and pulled. The coffin was not sealed—it slid out into the room, empty.

**D**URING the ten seconds it took him to glide once again to the pilot room, Captain Halloran guessed what had happened. "The poor boob," he muttered half to himself. "Never should have let him come. Damn politics..."

He dived for the bank of switches marked *Subliminal*



*Excitation* and flipped the second one from the left. "Better have the Doc, too," he muttered, flipping another one further over. Then he brought down one of the viewing screens and began scanning the area around the ship. In a matter of seconds he had spotted the spacesuit floating a few hundred yards out.

He was just fastening down his space helmet when his first officer, Lieutenant Ralph DePauw, staggered in from the morgue.

"What the hell's going on?" DePauw asked sleepily.

Halloran waved in the direction of the television screen. "Tell you later," he said, clamping down on the helmet. In another moment he was passing through the air lock.

He gave himself a tremendous push with his legs as he shot out into space, then looked ahead to see if it would be sufficient. Munson was still moving away from the ship, as he would indefinitely if undisturbed. Of course he would continue along with the ship too, his momentum in one direction being independent of that in any other direction. Hal-

loran had only to exceed Munson's own push and he would catch up with him in a matter of seconds—he only hoped that it would not be too late.

When he was close enough to grab Munson's spacesuit, Halloran jerked him around so he could peer in through his faceplate. Then he saw the spare hose attached to the chloroform bottle. He closed the valve, then opened the regular oxygen valve to its fullest. He began thumping Munson's arms and chest through the heavy spacesuit until he saw signs of awakening, then he opened his repulsion nozzle and dragged Munson back to the ship.

DePAUW and the ship's doctor were waiting for them. Halloran turned Munson over to the doctor, then went aside with DePauw.

"I want printed instructions pasted on the wall here and in the 'morgue'," he said, "so nothing like this will happen again."

DePauw shrugged "What language you want 'em printed in?" he asked sarcastically. "Baby talk?"

"That's enough of that," Halloran snapped at him, bouncing out of his spacesuit. "He may not have known what to do, but it's a good thing for us he knew what *not* to do. There are at least a dozen ways that he could have killed us, and he didn't take a single chance. That's guts, in my book, Mister. That kid can fly with me any time, anywhere; if he ever wants to try it again."

**A**N HOUR or so later Cy Munson was back inside his coffin. He felt perfectly at ease this time. The doctor had explained that it had been a million-to-one-shot that had awakened him—the combination of hard muscles that had resisted the original injection, resulting in an incomplete suspension of his life processes, plus a bad connection in the subliminal excitation circuit for his coffin.

"Actually you've aged about a week in the eight years we've been out," the doctor told him. "Maybe that doesn't seem like

much, but if it hadn't been for the bad connection, you would have gone on aging until you starved to death, or died of thirst. On the other hand, if you hadn't been so close to consciousness, the conditions set up by the bad connection might not have been strong enough to arouse you, and all our oxygen and electrical power might have been dissipated through your coffin. Believe me, son, unwittingly or not, you saved this expedition."

The captain, too, had patted him on the back. Even Lieutenant DePauw had patiently and politely explained the workings of the controls to him. Even if he did wake up again now, he would know what to do. But what pleased him most was the news that they were only eight years out from Earth, instead of the full sixty.

"I knew it," he said happily, as he closed his eyes and waited for sleep to come again. "I knew that little Laurie wasn't any eighty years old."







## Editorial

# THE PLOT, THE PLOT!

The *American College Dictionary* lists, among the several definitions of the word "plot": *the plan, scheme, or main story of a play, novel, or the like*, and what follows will be based upon this definition. Note that "plan, scheme" as well as "main story".

Now one of the reasons why most literary critics are inclined to take a very dim view of science fiction, or simply pay no attention to it—considering it unworthy of serious attention—is that the majority

of published stories categorized as "science fiction" has come from the pulp magazines.

Bear in mind that "pulp" fiction was merely the most inexpensive form of "popular fiction". And, by and large, pulp stories have been plot-centered in that everything is subordinated to the "main story". The plot is all-important; the pace must be fast—or *andante*, which means, moving along—at all times. All incidents and character-conflicts have to be of such a

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# Day of the Glacier

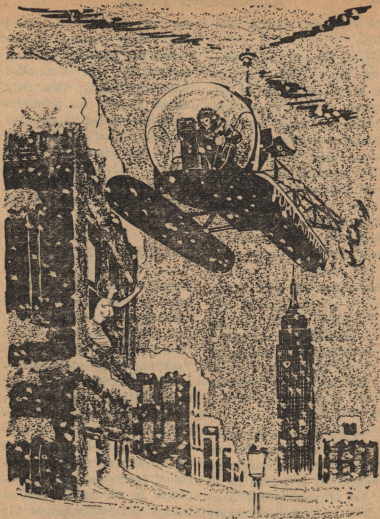
by R. A. Lafferty

illustrated by Emsh

*Suddenly, the snow began to fall — and it didn't stop falling! But Dr. Ergodic Eimer was prepared; he knew that a new glaciation was due to start this April. He wasn't prepared, though, to find the refuge he'd planned for already occupied ...*

THE FIFTH or Zurich-thal glaciation of the Pleistocene began on the morning of April 1, 1962, on a Sunday about nine o'clock by eastern time. This was about twenty-five hours earlier than Doctor Ergodic Eimer had calculated; it threw him into a panic, as his prepara-





A few of the trapped people were rescued before the endless blizzard had gone too far ...

tions were not entirely completed.

Lesser persons had been thrown into a panic nearly an hour before by a series of lesser events. And yet on an ordinary day they would have been of major magnitude.

It was that the thirty-three ICBM launching bases of the United States and Canada had been destroyed simultaneously. Full details were not immediately available, and now due to subsequent catastrophes they are lost forever.

Radio and TV news flashes tried to give a warning and fragmentary details, but on every channel and frequency the same cool voice always cut in: "This is an April Fools' Day simulated news broadcast. Do not be alarmed. This program is fictional."

Congress had been in session for three months, and the new Peace Faction was completely dominant. As is known to all who are acquainted with Mergendal's Law of Parliamentary Subversion, in all of the once-free countries that had succumbed to the Controlled Statists (now thirty-seven) it

was subsequently discovered that twenty percent of the elected had clandestinely been working for the Controlled Statists all along; that sixty percent had no true principles or basis of belief of any sort and no practical aim except to be on the winning side, and that a final twenty percent were to some degree die-hards, more or less devoted to the old way.

INCIDENTALLY, at this moment the latter percent had virtually ceased to exist. A series of nearly one hundred mysterious early morning murders in Washington, Chevy Chase, Silver Spring, New York, and other not-too-widely-scattered locations had done for most of them. This was not widely known even now, several hours later; although curiously the accounts of several of their deaths were in the metropolitan papers before they happened. In the case of one, at least, it did not happen at all; he had forewarning and was miles away at the time of the attempt.

It had been unseasonably



warm and dry for six weeks, for which reason nearly everyone except Dr. Ergodic Eimer and his cronies were surprised by the sudden chill and quick heavy snow.

These were in feverish preparation, having to telescope many hours of work into less than one. When they got to the airport, three inches of snow had already fallen, and it was as though it had only begun. They left quickly in three chartered planes, the last ever to leave there.

In the great cities of the Eastern seaboard, only a little over five inches of snow fell in the first hour; but in the second hour more than seventeen. Many people of the nation seeing the fantastic accumulation simply went to bed for the day. And millions of them stayed there till they died; there was no way out.

America died that week except for a few lingering communities on the Gulf of California, and the lower Mexican deserts, and the snow-dusted Indies. Europe died, and most of Asia, and the southern continents froze from the bottom

up. Melbourne and Sydney and Port Elizabeth were buried, as well as Buenos Aires; and even Rio right on the tropic had seven feet of snow.

“THE LAST time it happened” said Dr. Eimer, “the Padiwire valley was a good place. We know this from our previous studies and our preparatory expedition there last year.”

“Who would have thought,” asked Professor Schubert, “that an ice age could have come so suddenly?”

“Apparently only myself,” replied the good doctor. “I told everybody worth telling but had very little response for my trouble. It isn’t as though we haven’t had four very recent ones to study. It isn’t as though it weren’t written plainly in the rocks for everyone to read. Though I must say” he continued as he shivered in his great coat, “that this was a mighty short interglacial—actually less than twenty thousand years of what we might call really nice weather.”

“Will it snow long?” asked Violet, his somewhat over-charming secretary. Dr. Eimer

often said that he kept Violet for her looks only, as she was not much smarter than the average Ph.D.

"I think not," he answered. "Possibly not more than ninety thousand years of maintained snow, and the accumulation itself will come in the first fraction of that period; a very short duration. This will be a sort of sport among the ice ages. There is no good reason for it to happen, and it could have been prevented. However, once the balance is tipped, it takes it a little while to swing back. We can be thankful that it will not be as long nor as cold as Wurm."

"Or Mindel or Riss," said Professor Schubert.

"Or Gunz," said Professor Gilluly. "I'd hate to have to go through that one again."

"None of you act as though it were serious" said Violet.

"Yes," said Doctor Eimer, "the world is dying and that is serious. But we will save ourselves, and part of the luggage we will take with us is a little good humor. If we are too serious, we will die also. The serious always die first."

"WHAT WAS wrong with your calculations?" asked Professor Schubert, "If we hadn't cut and run for it, we'd never have made it. Another half hour and we'd have been trapped for good."

"My calculations, as always, were perfect. But the balance was so delicate that a bit of unlooked-for turbulence set it off."

"Turbulence?"

"Possibly less than two hundred fission warheads that struck our launching bases. Who would have believed that such a little thing could upset the balance a day early. But the balance was delicate."

"LaPlace-Mendira said that an ice age must be preceeded by a thirty thousand year cooling-off period."

"LaPlace-Mendira is an idiot. The Siberian mammoths were frozen solid with green grass between their teeth. There was no more a cooling-off period then than now. In ninety or a hundred thousand years from now, black Angus cattle will be found in the Kansas snow frozen solid with green grass in their several stomachs. It will



be a wonder—black, proto-bovine animals with incredibly short legs, and looking almost like a cross between a pig and a cow. You know, of course, that all cattle at the beginning of the fifth interglacial will be red, or red and white, and quite tall."

"I had not known that."

"It seems that almost anybody would be able to predict the way the combination color- and shoulder-height-coefficient gene would respond under moderately prolonged glacial stress."

"To tell you the truth, Doctor, I've never given it a thought." Professor Gilluly, in some ways, seemed not to have a complete scientific devotion.

"But it never before glaciated the whole surface of the earth."

"Nor will it now."

"**B**UT YOU said that even the Padiwire valley where we are going will have ice and snow."

"Oh, that is only temporary—a period of so short duration that we can disregard it, except of course to take precau-

tions that we do not freeze to death. I venture that it will not have fallen to within fifteen degrees above zero when we arrive there, and there will be less than nine inches of snow. You must remember that it is nearly on the equator, and we are less than two weeks from the vernal equinox. The quick-freeze period will last less than ten days. Then the clouds will clear, for the simple reason that all the moisture will have fallen, and the sun will have come through. And here, at least, the snow will somewhat melt—though farther north and south it will not.

"For a period of about seven years there will be very heavy snowfall and the ocean depth will drop about five feet a year. Then we enter the next phase—which will last no more than eighty-five years—when the snow will continue to accumulate on earth, but at a reduced rate, and the sea level will drop only about a foot a year. After that, the ice age will barely be able to maintain itself and will essentially be over.

"It is true that the snow will linger for another eighty thou-

sand years, but it will not greatly increase. And one day it will begin to diminish, and this will be much more rapid than experts believe. Then the oceans will rise at the rate of a foot a year for a hundred years, and a large part of the land will have different and larger rivers, and some former islands will be joined to the mainland, and new islands will be sliced off."

"You can predict ninety thousand years, but can you tell us what is happening right now? How did the other two planes get ahead of us?"

"If they did, then I can only say that they passed us in the snow—for it does look as though two planes have already landed."

"Well, does it look as if we have already landed too?" asked Violet. "There is a third plane down there. Is that us?"

"Obviously it is not. Are you getting light-headed? There are, if you will look closely, at least seven planes there. Well, we have made no preparations for landing elsewhere. We will land as we planned."

And as soon as they touched

down they were taken into custody.

**NAUCHNII - KOMANDIR**  
Andreyev, known in scientific circles as the Anagallic, was pleased and perfunctory.

"Ah, liddle Doktor Eimer, is it true you are not a complete idiot? I had thought you were nearly complete. An idiot may or may not know enough to come in out of the rain, but you have come out of the snow. You surprise me. As you see we are in total control. These three are your only planes?"

"No. No. We have quite an armada on the way."

"Those who are not practiced should lie little or not at all. But there has been stupidity all around. This morning our leaders believed they would have the whole world in their hand, and this afternoon it is some of their delegates who do have all that will be left of it. It pleases me the way it happened. I would not have changed it if I could. I am now the commander of the world."

"You are not our commander."



"You are dogs. Learn that. We have studied the eskimo, and one rule they have: the dogs do not sleep in the house or the tent. The dogs grow lazy if they sleep inside. We have your equipment. You are the dogs and you will sleep in the snow and learn your place."

"We will see."

"We have already seen. We have you outnumbered now by three hundred to fifty. It will not always be so we hope—the working dogs should outnumber the men. But our positions will not change. You know (though few others hold theories that coincide with my own) that during the last ice age, the Wurm, there were two types of men or near-men: the Neanderthal who were the masters, and the Grimaldi who were their slaves. We are the new Neanderthals and you are the new Grimaldi. We had thought to use a few jungle Indian remnants for that, but now we will use you.

"But you must be more numerous. There seems to be only twenty-seven women among you, and my census clerk has just reported that fif-

teen of them are without mates. This will be corrected. Arrange it among yourselves, but arrange it by nightfall. And remember, we expect fruition within nine months. I believe that in one of your obsoleted books there is the phrase about cutting down the tree that will not bear fruit. And do not any of you get peculiar ideas about resisting. We have with us a sadist group. I shudder at these things myself, but those to whom I delegate them will not shudder."

THEY WERE in a white and brown world. The savanna vegetation on the fringe of the jungle, unacquainted with frost for thousands of years, withered at its touch. Every growing thing seemed suddenly to die. Yet the snow could not yet cover it all, it was too lush and high and thick; the small trees would bend with its weight, and then spring free and shake it off their crowns, so that when it finally covered them it covered them from the bottom up.

"Can we even live here?" asked Violet. "It seems that we



could starve or freeze here just as easily as back home. We might not freeze quite as hard, if that is any comfort."

"No, we will do neither" said Gully Gilluly. "We will not have it bad. By dark tonight a million birds will descend on this valley. They will perch on every tree and bush and on the ground. We can knock ten thousand of them in the heads and stack them in the snow."

"We cannot lack for fuel. Enough trees for a hundred years have been struck dead here within several hours. And within ten days there will be better adapted new vegetation start through the old. Doctor Eimer says this always happens: that seeds that have been here dormant since Wurm will now come to life. And by that time there will be patches through the snow. We will have two three-month periods a year when much of the snow will disappear, and we will be in the middle of one of them. It will not be bad. Of course we will have to get the jump on our little red-minded brothers. That will not be easy."

"Oh, don't hurry about that.

They have one good idea. I would kind of like to have a mate by evening. Do you have any ideas?"

"I HAVE AN idea about what your idea is. But what is that look on your face? If it's a smile, it surely has some odd overtones. Violet, don't look at me like that. I can't get married, Violet—I have my work to do."

"Your work is back in New York under quite a few feet of snow. Think how deep it'll be by morning. And just remember, it will be nearly ninety thousand years before you can get back to it. That's a long time to be a bachelor."

"Yes, that's a long time, Violet—I never thought about it that way."

"Which would you rather have, me or the sadist group?"

"I don't know, Violet. There's a lot to be said against both of you. O, I didn't mean that quite the way it sounded. I would prefer you immeasurably to the sadist group. But I have a stubborn streak. I will not be forced by those jokers."

"Couldn't you be stubborn



about something else? There will be much you can be stubborn about under these new circumstances."

"I will be stubborn about this. We will see who are the dogs. Maybe it is only about fifteen above zero, maybe there are only seven or ten inches of snow. And even though it will moderate within ten days it will be bitter tonight. Be a good girl, get your bolo, and see how much wood you can cut."

"I had a date tonight for the opening of 'Pink Snow.' Now I don't believe there will be any opening, and my boyfriend has probably frozen to death."

**THEY** WORKED hard as the afternoon wore on. Commander Andreyev kept buzzing around them; and, though he was insulting, yet he seemed to want their company.

"Professor Gilluly, you are high in the confidence of Dr. Eimer. Has he any particular ideas of governing this colony?"

"None that I know of. Ask him. Here he comes."

"No. None, Andy—we figured it would take care of itself."

"And now providently we have taken that worry from you."

"There was no worry, and you have taken nothing from us."

"I am the commander of the world" said Andreyev.

"You said that before."

"My superiors will all be dead in hours or days. There will be no one to give me orders." He said this last wistfully.

"Do you need someone to give you orders?"

"No. No. Of course not. Now I shall give the orders." And he went away.

**BUT** IN less than an hour he was back.

"Do you think, Dr. Eimer, that it is snowing harder in Moscow than in New York?"

"Of course it is. That is in line with my predictions. Is it not in line with yours?"

"Certainly. But I only wondered..."

"What?"

"I wondered if it were possible for someone to be making it snow very hard in my country?"



"What are you talking about? How could anyone be *making* it snow? You have been studying the coming glaciation for twenty years. What is the matter with you now?"

"It is nothing, nothing at all. It is just something I picked up on the radio a moment ago. You understand there is a great deal of panic in the world, and many things are being said that in normal times would not seem normal. It is just something I heard on the radio."

He went away. And the professors, doctors, and assorted persons worked very hard until they had attained the means and assurance of shelter and heat for the night. Then they rested.

"I always thought you were all crazy" said Violet, "but you paid well—so I worked for you. But how did you know it was going to get cold? What makes an ice age?"

"There's a lot of things that can do it, Violet. It only takes a little change. Between freezing and melting there is only a fraction of a degree, and if it is worldwide that is all that is needed. There is a solar vari-

able cycle involved here, and an oxygen carbon-dioxide balance or unbalance; there is a cloud envelope disparity and a change of world-wide air flow. But that is just a fancy way of saying it, Violet. The straight fact is that every now and then it just plain gets cold."

ABOUT DARK, commander Andreyev came to them again.

"I extend the hand of friendship" said Andreyev.

"Good for you, Andy."

"My remarks earlier today were intemperate and ill-advised."

"Indeed they were. But how did you come to realize it?"

"I propose that we join our forces."

"I propose that we leave things unjoined. We should gradually learn to get along."

"I propose that you reign as supreme commander, Dr. Eimer."

"I propose that you get over your nonsense, whatever it is."

"I am putting all my forces at your disposal, everything, even my sadist group—they are yours. Say the word. Is there



anyone you want tortured or intimidated? They are avid to do it."

"There is nobody. But please explain the change."

"Dr. Eimer, if you were accustomed to obeying orders and believed it right to do so, should you not obey a final order—even though it were unenforceable on you?"

"I think so."

"It is an order I received, perhaps the last order that will come over the air. There have been all-channel and all language broadcasts. I cannot disobey an order. It is to all our commanders and agents everywhere in the world."

"And what is the order?"

"It is that we surrender unconditionally to you."

"What is there left to surrender? And why have they done it?"

"They seem to believe in my country, even the leaders—oh, I don't know how to say what it is that they believe in my country!"

**F**OR IF IT was snowing in Washington and New York, and in the tropics, it was snow-

ing doubly in Moscow—an odd quirk of the new glaciation that had been predicted by both Dr. Eimer and Commander Andreyev working independently on two different continents.

By noon eastern time, when white night had already descended on the Russias, the mysterious urgent pleas had come to a heart-rending climax.

By cable and broadcast came the notes.

"The launchings were unauthorized" said the first note.

"The launchings were in error. We request that you stop the snow until negotiations can be resumed" said the second.

"Urgent, repeat, urgent, that snow be stopped" said the third.

It was a puzzled President and staff that read the cables, and a mystified public that heard the broadcasts. They did not immediately realize that Moscow believed the incredible snow was an American secret weapon, unleashed in retaliation of the missile launchings and destruction of the American bases.

The notes became pleading: "Government being completely



redesigned on more amenable lines. Request patience and understanding. Urgent snow be stopped. Is now more than four meters. Advise surrender terms. Cessation of nivalation critical."

"It is hardly less critical here" said the President. "Nine feet is no light snow, and I doubt if it can be stopped by either act of Congress or executive directive. I could give a lot of orders, but what good would it do? Nobody is going anywhere."

By the time of the Washington dusk, which was only a gray overlay of the blurred

white, Moscow was buried under twenty-six feet of snow, and there was two thirds as much over most of America.

Down in the Padiwire valley on the equator Dr. Eimer and professors Schubert and Gilluly and some others went with abdicated Commander Andreyev to his tent to hear the last of the broadcasts.

"Abject surrender. Request for the love of God you stop snow."

And the last message was only a broken particle of a phrase: "*Milocerd!*"

Mercy!

*The object was nearly the size and shape of a half-dollar. It had a round, raised double rim about twice its thickness. It was completely unstained, quicksilver smooth, although it must have been buried for years under a foot of topsoil. The flat sides were perfect distortionless mirrors. Jerry Wells started to study the "gimmick" — and the chain of events started that rocked the world...*

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# puritan planet

by Carol Emshwiller

*The name of this planet was Brotherhood, but the people were behaving in a most un-brotherly manner toward Morgan. They wouldn't help him — because they'd heard him say "Damn!"*

"H ERE KITTY, kitty, kitty. Come on you cat, we're going to crash. Don't you understand?"

Three minutes was all they had. Three minutes to get strapped in tight and now, *now* she wanted to play hard to get.

Morgan had seen ships with two jets off come down before; they came in fast and at the last moment, just when you thought they were safe, they flipped over and scarred long, ugly creases in the earth.

Where the deuce was she? He crawled on hands and knees, a big, square man, searching under each bunk. Then, cheek to floor, he peered under the control chairs. "There isn't time, damn it, we ought to be sitting in those chairs now."

It was because he had hit her, batted her out of the way from where she stood right in front of the middle screen. "I had to see, girl, I had to see." He never hit her, never had before, and now she was hurt, aloof. She wouldn't stoop to coming when he called, not after that.

"Damn it, cat," he whispered,



"I was upset too. No beacon, no radio answer, no landing field, but we have to land the shape we're in."

Brotherhood, that's what the charts said was the name of the planet. But you'd think a planet by that name would have a beacon, and would answer radio calls, and would have a landing field. Morgan had circled the planet three times, looking and calling, and he was thinking he would have to ditch in one of the gray seas because they had to land soon; and then Cat had jumped up, blotting out the middle screen for just a second—but it was a second that could mean life or death.

He had swatted her away harshly, cursing, but she hadn't made him miss the field. He spotted it right afterwards—abandoned, lumpy, overgrown, but a landing field all right. Anyway, the way they were going to land, the shape of the field was the least of their worries.

**H** E HAD set the ship on automatic then. It would circle once more, then nose up

and that would be it. Three minutes, they had, and *she* was playing hard to get.

"Here kitty, kitty, kitty." She'd never come to his call now. He crawled along the wall by the suit lockers. Then he stood up, stretching on tip toes, and swung his hand blindly along the locker top. "Got her."

She almost got away, but he held firmly to the end of her hind leg. Her claws rasped on the slippery metal, clutching anything, but he brought her down and plunked her harshly in the center of the nearest control seat. The wide belt went over her firmly, covering her completely, and fastened with a click.

His big hand lingered for a moment on the hump that was the cat under the belt. "It's all right, Cat. It's all right." He jumped into the other seat. The ship was already nosing up and there was time to fasten only the middle belt, but it would have to be enough. Then the jets roared. God, did ever a ship shake like this before? It was wrong, all wrong.

"Meow."

"It's all ri..." What was the



use? She'd never hear him now and talking was too damn hard.

**I**T WAS still and black and beautiful, and he wanted to stay in the soft, warm, dark forever, but someone was interrupting it with a noise that made his head ache.

"Gobbledegook, gobbledegook." It was louder this time. He could feel the noise in every joint, a pulsing hurt. Be quiet, only for just a little longer, be quiet.

"Meow."

Once, a long time ago, he had had a cat, a soft, little she cat with an M on her forehead and a white tipped tail.

"Meow, meow."

He *had* a cat!

"Gobbledegook, gobbledegook. Can you hear us? Brother, can you hear us? Are you all right?"

Morgan fumbled with balloon fingers at the seat belt clasp. He swung his legs to the side and sat up. This was the morning after a hundred binges, and in the tanks, only water, and not much left of that.

"Can you hear us, Brother? Are you all right?"

"Loud and clear," Morgan said. His voice was someone else's, a weaker breathless man. "Loud and clear, damn it." But he was too far from the mike for them to hear.

The balloon fingers pulled at the cat's belt. He tried to hold her when she was free. He wanted to make up some way for the confining belt, for the crash and for having batted at her, but she was more agile than he—especially now—and frightened and upset. She jumped to the floor, ran crouching and disappeared under a bunk. She was gone to console herself alone, just when he needed to console her.

"Are you all right, Brother?"

**M**ORGAN stepped to the panel and sat down before the mike. He leaned on his elbows and rested his head in his hands. "I'm all right," he said.

"No broken bones or anything, Friend? That was quite a crash."

Morgan rested his forehead against the cool, dead screen. "I'm fine."

"Ah, good." The relief



sounding in the voice was just the sort Morgan would expect to hear on a planet called Brotherhood when someone said they were, after all, all right.

But then the voice took on a sorrowful whine. "Brother, Brother, you have landed without permission and it is forbidden."

"I called in from half an hour out. You were stone dead. I had no choice. I had to land at the closest place and that was here. The ship's crippled and I'm low on air and water."

"Interplanetary rule number 6A states that one must always have permission."

"Except in an emergency, and why didn't you answer?" Morgan's voice began to have its usual depth.

"Ah, but friend, we must be careful here on Brotherhood. It isn't as if we were like any planet. Unfortunately we've found that in some situations we have to make our own rules."

"They don't apply to me."

"Ah, but they do." The voice was terribly sorry. It practically dripped away on its sorri-

ness. "Ah, Brother, but they do."

"Landing rules!"

"Most especially landing rules."

MORGAN'S voice was all his own now, and more. "Hell, that's against the law."

There were others with the first voice, either at mikes of their own, or crowded close around. He heard their, *ohs*, and, *ahs*, and one said, "There, you see?", and another, "I told you so. What can you expect from foreigners?" and, "He swore, he swore, he swore!"

"We have our children to think about," the first voice said. "Many died to bring them to this place where they could live and grow protected from outside influences. We have loved our children more than life itself, and we so love them now. More than life, Brother."

"Look, we'll talk about it face to face. 'I'm com...'" Morgan felt the first pinch of fear drawing up the skin of his face and tightening his scalp. The floor was comfortably down, as usual. The control room rotated smoothly with the



pull of gravity. But in front of him, on the panel, was a bubble on a graph that showed how the ship lay.

No, he wasn't coming out. Not just now, he wasn't, and probably not at all without help from *them*.

Air, for how long? That was the thought that had made his scalp prickle. He *couldn't* stay in the ship.

The voice was talking on. "We could lift the ship, Brother, so the hatch is free, but we don't think it's safe to our young people."

"What do you mean, not safe? There's nothing wrong with me. I'm not different from anybody else."

"**M**EN FROM other planets know many things we have forgotten, even in what they take for granted. You have used words, too, that it is written in our book, must not be said. There may even be things written down there that you might *do*." The voice whispered now, implying things too horrible to be mentioned or even thought about. "We cannot take that chance."

The voice, the sad, sad voice, the new rules, and, ah, the children, more than life, they said they loved them and Morgan knew whose life they had in mind right now.

He had heard of colonies like this before. Puritans, they were, and the hardest, the severest people to deal with.

Could he ever have said what they wanted him to say, even if he'd known in time? Could he yes and no on signal, and lie and fawn? Only actually would it be lying? Morgan was against sin, like everybody else; he was for goodness and brotherhood and all the things they were for, except maybe the outside trappings of it.

There was the difference, the veneer he cared for not a bit. In fact he always gave just the wrong answers to the people who wore the clothes of goodness too tight, with all the zippers done up neatly. Even if he had tried, he doubted he'd have been able to ingratiate himself to these people. He'd have said the wrong things or laughed at the wrong time.

And it was too late. The *ahs* and *ohs* had condemned him;



he had been a witness against himself already. And perhaps even without him saying a word they'd have condemned him because he wasn't one of them.

"If I get out of here on my own," Morgan asked the voice, "what's my life worth then?"

"We of Brotherhood do not kill, even in self preservation. Only sometimes, when it is necessary, we let die, that's all. But we never kill a fellow man. If you come out, we must let you go free, only we cannot help you."

"I'm coming out then," Morgan said, but in his head the word, "air", kept repeating itself with a big question mark after it. Was there going to be *time* enough to get out?

"We leave you then," the voice said, "and for your sake, good luck."

"Ha!"

**SO** NOW to get out, damn them.

The first thing to do was to see how much air there was. Morgan studied the gauge on the panel, but it was broken. Well, it was easy enough to calculate. Take what the gauge had read before the crash, (he

remembered approximately,) subtract the number of hours, add one big man and one small cat. What was the answer? Maybe a day's worth, about another twenty four hours.

One day to get out in, and to do it, a hammer, a welding torch, crowbar, assorted small tools, wire, a pulley, and two space suits—ridiculous every one of them, especially for someone in a hurry.

He took the crowbar and let himself out of the control room into the coin shaped section at the back of it from which the hatch could be reached. Only the hatch was flat to the ground—probably *underground* five or six feet from the force of the landing. Morgan pulled the emergency opener, but the hatch was jammed tight and wouldn't budge. He tried the crowbar and the opener together. No dice.

**SO** HE WOULD have to climb into the narrow strip between the outer skin of the ship and the suspended room to the only other place he could get at the seams. He stepped up on a girder and pulled himself in. It was cramped and



greasy, and half of it inaccessible anyway. His heavy shoulders rubbed on each wall unless he stood sideways. He climbed from girder to girder examining the seams, hoping for some damage somewhere he could take advantage of. He tore his overalls on a projection and swore loudly, and the words echoed back at him satisfyingly. *When I get out on this puritan planet*, he thought. (deliberately not letting himself think, *if I get out*), *I'll have to build myself an echo chamber so I can hear some swear words now and then.*

He began to sing a bawdy song; it sounded like a whole chorus of deep-voiced men, and right after that he found the place where the ship seemed bent a little and one seam had a looser look. "You see," he told himself in a loud voice, "what a song like *that* can do," and he tried to fit the useless crowbar into the groove.

All he needed was a little air to give him time to break out.

first came out. Held up by their own air pressure, they said, like balloons. Get them landing on a heavy planet and they'll fall apart. He knew the ships weren't used near the big planets, but still they were tough. There was one way to test the theory, though, for someone not afraid to lose all his air in the process. Morgan was afraid but it was the only thing he could think of to try, and anyway, was he just going to sit around breathing the air till it gave out? By some fluke it might possibly work. He knew what the seams were like. They *would* be weaker if the pressure came from outside.

Singing again (it was a lucky song) he went back into the control room, got the wire, some metal rings, the pulley, the welding torch. After two hours of sweaty work, he had four tight wires pulling inwards from rings on the two plates next of the weakened seam. He went back to the control room, got out the two space suits and started looking for Cat.

THEY HAD joked about these little ships when they

He flushed her from under a bunk, chased her in a circle



around the room, and finally cornered her behind the locker. He held her firmly in the crook of his arm, one hand under her chest. He could feel her heart beating rapidly under his fingers and then he felt the vibrating of her silent purr. She wasn't really so mad at him after all. He put his head down so his rough cheek touched the silky fur. This small thing, warm with life, was the only living creature he had seen or touched for a long time.

"Come on baby," he whispered in her ear, "I've got a nice dark place for you where you can be alone."

**H**E PUT her before the suit neck and gave her an encouraging push from behind. She sniffed the edges daintily and then peered inside.

"Be a good girl and go on in."

Dignified, sedate, she stepped into the body of the suit and disappeared into the dark lower sections.

"There, I told you it was just what you were looking for."

Morgan carefully set the air

and temperature dials and tried the helmet on himself first. Then he switched on the suit radio good and loud, so he could hear her if she was in any trouble, and snapped the helmet in place.

Lying on his back he squirmed into the other suit, then sat up stiffly and adjusted the helmet dials. He turned the radio up loud and put the helmet on. There was a sound, a rustling from the radio and it didn't sound like Cat. Then there was the sigh of someone taking a big breath, someone bored. They were monitoring him. They couldn't hear much unless he was close to the panel and the mike, but they evidently wanted to hear what they could just the same, to see if he was actually going to come out. Or, he thought bitterly, if he was dying, when that would be. Maybe they wanted to be ready so as to give him a nice funeral.

"I hear you," he said. "I know you're there. What are you listening for, death rattles?"

There was a startled, sniffing sound, but no answer.



"Brotherhood!" Morgan said it like a curse.

**H**E TOOK the hammer and pounded the lid off the water tank. Then he opened the air pressure release valves, one way valves, out only, and turned up the thermostat as if the planet, Brotherhood, was colder than space, (and to Morgan it seemed that it was).

He leaned back in the suit, resting the legs in lock position. Now was the time for that lucky, bawdy song again. Having an audience listening in would give him a special satisfaction, too.

The ship was efficient. It took only ten minutes before the control room was full of steam. *What do they think on the outside,* Morgan wondered, *to see all the steam coming out?* He watched it flow toward the air vents and when it slowed he gave out a loud, long string of curses.

"That's for luck," he told whoever it was that listened in. Then he set the thermostat down to the bottom like he was in the middle of hell. *If it works,* he thought, *it ought to*

*be so damn cold in here that I'll see the air condensing as it comes in. Those wires on the plates are contracting, too. A ship built like this and weakened by the crash ought to practically cave in with even a partial vacuum and all that pull on the sides. At least there ought to be an air leak...a small one...pretty soon.*

He waited silently, imagining wisps of dancing, steamy air, but they were only almost there in corners where he wasn't looking.

**S**O, IT WASN'T going to work after all. By God, compliment those engineers. These ships were a lot sturdier than anybody thought.

There was a rustle from the radio, the scrape of a chair and whispering he couldn't hear well enough to understand. "Changing of the guard?" he asked. "Going out to lunch? It's time."

Lunch! Good Lord, he was hungry! For the past few hours he'd been thinking of nothing but getting out, and before that, only of finding a place and landing.



*Why didn't I think to eat before getting into this mess, he thought. And Cat—she'll be getting hungry too, soon, and making a hell of a racket about it if she has to wait. A man and a cat should at least have a good meal before dying. But then does it matter?*

For the first time he let himself think about death. There was about four hours worth of air left in each suit, more for the cat, less for him. That was the measure of life.

He was here, strong, alive, in contact with people who could help him if they would. That he would die had seemed impossible, but he began to realize that it was true, after all. There were four hours, four hungry hours now, to live, and that was all.

No! He didn't want it. He wasn't ready. It was useless, silly, to die like this for nothing, caged and helpless and for no reason at all.

**H**E FLEXED his arm muscles under the suit. He expanded his chest. He was in his prime; now was his time to live.

No! He felt the sweat then, first damp in the armpits and across his back. Even the air pumping in and out didn't take away the strange smell it had. He stank with a sweat of fear and of rage...rage at *them*.

Stop *thinking*, he told himself. *Move!*

He took the heavy hammer and started out of the control room. *Move*, by God!

It couldn't help him escape but he had to keep from bursting inside.

He stood in the cramped space before the weak seam and swung the hammer, letting it hit the back wall as hard as the outer skin. He could hear the ringing sound even through the suit. He could feel it vibrating up from his feet into his bones. *Move!* His shoulder muscles bulged against the suit. *Move! Move! Move!*

"Meowrrr?"

He stopped and stood trembling and dripping wet inside the suit.

"Meow?"

"What's that?" It was a whisper from the one at the radio as if the listener dared not speak at first, but then he



said it again out loud. "What is that?"

Morgan, breathless, said nothing.

"You never said you had a cat. We didn't realize." But Morgan was speechless, filled with a sudden, wild hope.

**H**E HEARD them shuffling and whispering about the radio. There were more people coming. "He could be making that noise himself," someone said, and another, "No, he was breathing hard."

"Animal Welfare, call the head of Animal Welfare."

Then a voice came out loud and close to the mike. "But we've got to get that cat out. A man is one thing, a creature of sin, but can we let a poor dumb animal suffer and die this way for a man?"

"No! No!"

"Call the derricks. Raise the ship."

So that's the way it would be, and all because of Cat. Shutting him up again would be killing and they wouldn't do that. He was free.

"Cat," he whispered, "damn you Cat."

One girl had been assaulted, one frightened, one roughed up, one beaten, and one killed. And all the survivors described the same figure—a masked man in ragged clothes. Shelley, my ex-wife lived in that town, alone—she'd be a logical choice for the next victim, unless Simon Ark could solve

## The Case of the Ragged Rapist

A SIMON ARK ADVENTURE

by Edward D. Hoch

*featured  
in the  
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# Once In A Blue Moon

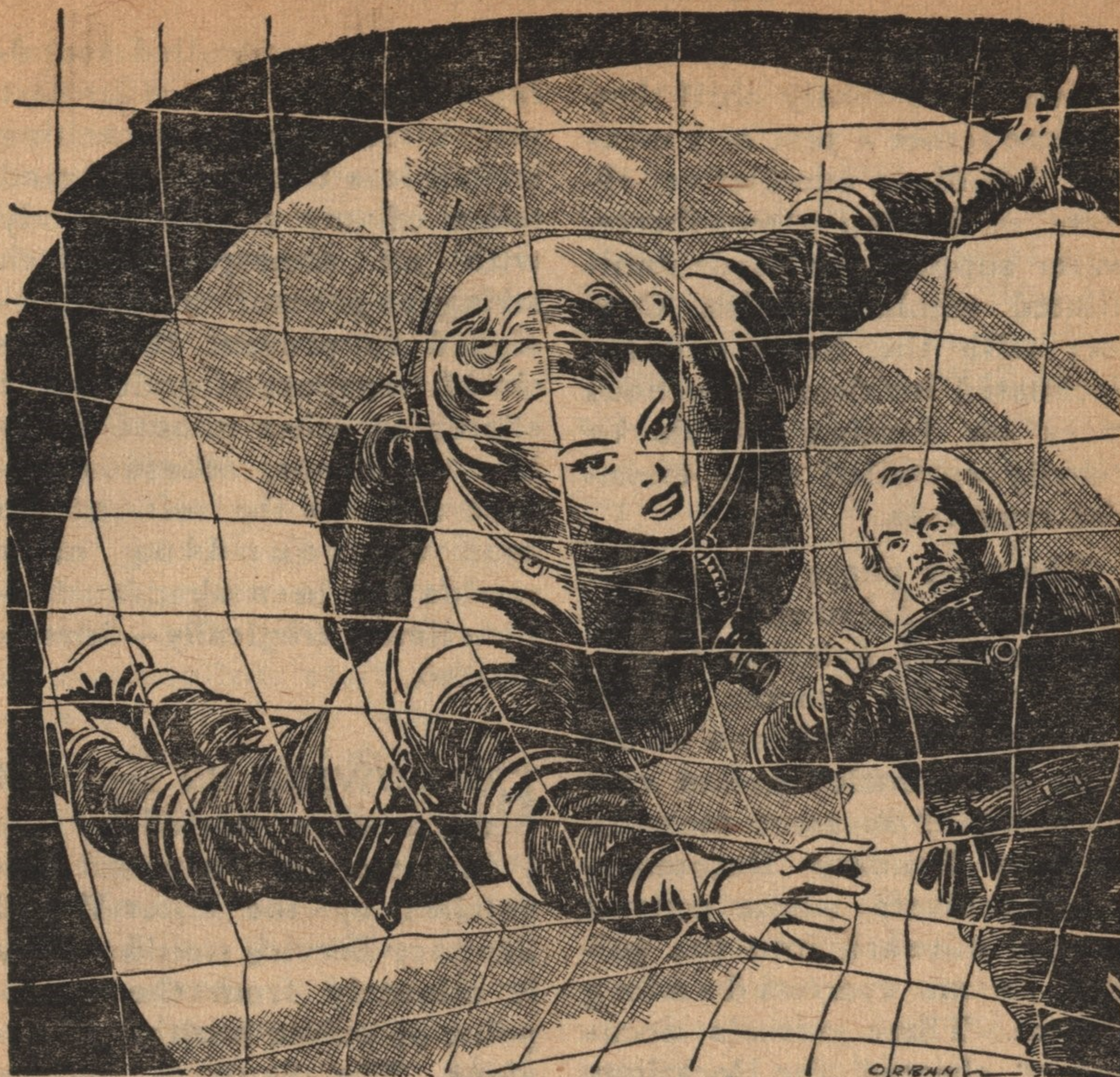
Novella

by Norman L. Knight

*What grim irony! Ilrai, the Martian author, had written of an imaginary wonder-world in the system of Alpha Draconis. Now, decades later, he was an unwanted member of a Terrestrial expedition to this very planet. And there they found that a party of Earthmen had taken Ilrai's fiction for fact, and had come here, seeking the paradise he had described ...*

THE OPENING phase of exploration beyond the circuit of the Solar planets was pervaded by a spirit of headlong pursuit of horizons that had receded to infinity, by a sense of unprecedented release, of inexhaustible novelty, of the bursting of world-old barriers. Mars, unexpectedly more kindred than had been surmised, and Earth alike flung their ships among the stars at ever-mounting velocities in a reckless fury of discovery; and uncounted voyagers on those ships perished in an endless





Th colonists arrived, full of great hopes ...

variety of ways—fantastic, dismal, or shocking.

Speedily it was realized that the stellar universe was not merely a bottomless Pandora's box of opportunity and wonder, but that it was also a realm brutally indifferent to the welfare of alien explorers. And the explorers were not

alone in their misfortunes. The parent worlds and their far-flung colonies were ravaged by strange epidemics which slipped past the tightest quarantines and for which remedial measures usually were forthcoming only after prolonged and hectic research. Indiscreet importations of



plant and animal life at times thrived exuberantly until they became either a pest or a menace. Insidious cumulative effects of foreign atmospheres, water supplies, or foods annihilated whole colonies. Contact with the Solar cultures decimated luckless indigenous races on foreign worlds or heavily curtailed some essential resources.

The next phase was one of more sober judgment, maturer caution, and systematic control over the process of expansion. The traditions of the first untrammelled rovers were perpetuated in some measure by the Primary Reconnaissance cruisers, whose courses ranged outward into the galaxy in an ever-widening sphere. These vessels accurately charted the locations and characteristics of stars; the orbits and number of attendant planets, and the obstacles and aids to navigation. Above all, they noted the locations of "suitable worlds"—that is to say, worlds which might be suitable for colonization by the Solar races. Such craft were strictly forbidden to land upon any uncertified world, or to penetrate its atmosphere, or even to collect samples of the atmosphere

with remote-controlled sounding-shells. They were in fact prohibited from approaching within less than two thousand miles of any planetary body with an atmosphere. Such stringent precautions were designed to prevent the inter-world transport of undesirable spores or other minute floating organisms, whose existence alive in the soft-vacuum zone surrounding other worlds has been abundantly—sometimes tragically—demonstrated.

**F**OLLOWING the report of a "suitable world" by the Primary cruiser, a vessel dispatched by the Inter-World Sanitary Service would survey it minutely from the standpoint of public health and hygiene. The Sanitary Service craft were known as "Caduceus ships" since they displayed the ancient emblem of the serpent-entwined staff of Hermes. They were huge globular affairs approaching a small asteroid in size, and carried within themselves smaller subsidiary vessels with which the actual landings were effected. It was a primary principle of the Sanitary Service that no Caduceus ship should bring to nor carry



away from any world (before that world had been certified) any micro-organisms save those in its bacteriological laboratory—which was separated from the remainder of the interior by impregnable bulkheads and approached through quadruple air-locks. The Caduceus ship itself made no landing, but remained in the vicinity of the world under observation, sending down supplies or receiving samples and cultures in remote-controlled craft which were sterilized on their return to the mother ship.

The narrative which presently we shall proceed to relate concerns certain findings reported by the ship *Caduceus of Alcor*, out of Alcorhaven, a colonized world revolving about the star Alcor in Ursa Major. The planet which is the subject of this report has come to be known as Kenia, after a region on the terrestrial continent of Africa, for reasons which will appear in due course. It accompanies the star Azuran in the neighborhood of Alpha Draconis—visible from Alcorhaven but not from Earth, because of intervening clouds of opaque matter.

The report above mentioned

was compiled by Counselor Jeffrey Sarrasen, the adviser and director of the landing-party; and while it gives a lucid, scholarly, and technical account of the biological and hygienic aspects of life on Kenia—including the peculiar civilization of the Wall-Makers—it omits equally interesting personal matters. The latter are recorded in Counselor Sarrasen's private log and in the writings of that Herodotus of the spaceways, the Earth-born Martian, Ilrai the Younger.

**I**LRAI'S presence on a ship of the Sanitary Service seems curious when one learns that he had no official connection therewith. But there is evidence that he was an adept at wire-pulling and the application of diplomatic persuasion in influential quarters. He appears to have spent half of his life turning up in strange places. He was disturbed by the fact that the diffusion of the Solar races had outstripped their means of rapid communication, and feared that they were in danger of losing their sense of unity. Therefore he conceived of writing—and publishing on an inter-world scale—a sort of conglomerate prose epic con-



cerning unusual and widely-dispersed events, which should be the basis of a universal literature. The "Galactic Chronicles" were the result, and had grown to thirty-one volumes at his death midway of the twenty-seventh century.

At that time, our migration through the galaxy was a slow and creeping progress—or so it seems today. The fastest cruiser then in existence, if it could have reached maximum speed instantly and maintained it uninterruptedly for the span of an average human lifetime, could have traveled only halfway along the longest galactic diameter. Even so, the ships traveled faster than the fastest means of signalling them known. The discovery of the vibratory gravitational beam, which led to the stereophone, was an event still in the future.

But our story lies in the past, in the year 2615 A. D., and it begins in the cabin of Captain Jutland, the skipper of the *Caduceus of Alcor*.

# I

“SO FAR AS we can tell from here, Sarrasen, this AL237 seems to

be a fairly decent sort of a world, as planets go,” declared Captain Jutland. “The daylight side has been completely blanketed by clouds and thunderstorms ever since we arrived. It will be queer, living under a blue sun, but probably you’ll never see it—only a sort of blue twilight filtering through the clouds. It’s always clear and apparently calm on the dark side, and I’d advise landing there. No need to feel your way through a two-or-three-mile depth of storm-clouds if you don’t have to. The odds are that you won’t run into any especially perplexing problems unless the thing’s inhabited—and we’ve had no chance to see any markings of structures during the day on account of the clouds. You’re fortunate in taking down your first landing-party on what may be a comparatively simple mission. But I don’t need to tell you these things. You’ve followed the findings up to date.”

“I have, and they seem too favorable to be true,” responded Counselor Sarrasen. “Gravity about one-fifth more than Alcorhaven’s. Atmosphere



breathable, with about twice our accustomed amount of oxygen, the rest mainly nitrogen. The samples of air and water that were brought up by the soundings gave mostly negative results. The cultures grown from them were practically innocuous. Some white rats broke out with green freckles on their bellies but didn't seem to care. Three Martian eikrangs showed signs of lassitude, ran a slight temperature, recovered in forty-five hours. Humberling isolated the toxin and synthesized the antibody in both cases."

Captain Jutland leaned forward in his chair. "Now here's some information you won't relish. Ilrai has asked to be included in your party."

Sarrasen stiffened.

"I couldn't refuse him even if I wanted to, which I don't," Jutland continued. "He has an official authorization a yard long, under the Bi-Planetary Seal, which permits him to go anywhere and to see anything—so long as in so doing he doesn't interfere with official work, or expose others to unreasonable hazards. If you prefer not to assume the counsel-

lorship under such conditions, I might offer you my permission to withdraw now, but I'm not going to do that either. It would do your record no good. If you persist in this attitude of irrational hostility toward Martians, it will seriously limit your value to the Service. It's an obsession. It's an indication of emotional unbalance. You may as well face it and resolve to overcome it."

"THIS IS AN official disapproval of my personal opinions, I take it," remarked the Counselor coldly.

"I'm not concerned about your personal opinions if they don't reduce your service-ability blast it!" exploded Jutland. "And, strictly speaking, I'm not disapproving. I'm attempting an operation in mental surgery, but that may be what your case calls for. Possibly we could cure you painlessly by hypnosis, but I'd rather see you cure yourself.

"I don't have to be a mastermind to diagnose your ailment. You're accustomed to being versatile, able, more than ordinarily successful in your undertakings. So you feel ever-



lastingly humiliated when you're detailed for training in mental transmission and find that you're a total bilateral incompetent. That's being juvenile. Only about five percent of the human race are A1 telepaths anyway, and another five percent are blackouts like you. The Martians are something else—their worst is better than our best. That's why the training is in their hands.

"There's nothing disgraceful in having an impenetrable mind. In fact, there's always a spot for anyone with a mind like that. No one else can project his thoughts into it and it can't inadvertently transmit its own. You should be elated that not even a Martian can tell what you're thinking."

"Unless we have something further to say, there are other matters which need my attention," remarked Sarrasen.

"All right. That's all. Shove off, and the best of luck. But think it over."

## II

THE CONTACT ship *Hermes* lay in her launching-tunnel, her

nose pointed at the eighty-ton plug of the air-lock in the outer skin of the *Caduceus*. She was a hybrid craft, a streamlined sea-going space cruiser; double-keeled to provide a firm base upon a solid surface and to permit stable navigation on a body of water for economy of lift-power.

Counselor Sarrasen faced his landing-party in the mess-room of the *Hermes*. Half the company were telepaths of various degrees of ability, and he was certain that a darting interchange of thought proceeded among them. His resentment focused itself upon Ilrai. The Martian towered three feet above the heads of the Earthlings; his battery of eyes, equally spaced around the equator of his faceless cranium, rendered it impossible to judge at what point his attention was directed.

"In a few moments, when I give word, the launching-tunnel will be evacuated of air," began Sarrasen, struggling to suppress an irritated conviction that Ilrai was not paying attention; although the Martian lacked organs of speech,



like all members of his race, he possessed adequate hearing. "For some of us, as for me, this is the first time that we have been accepted for this kind of service. We are about to become, for an indefinite period, virtual exiles on a new world. We shall become laboratory animals just as truly as the humbler creatures we are taking with us. Let me repeat that, once we have landed, there will be no return until we are certain that we have not become carriers for some alien virus. Our results from the samples dredged up by the sounding-shells are hopeful but not conclusive. It may be that we shall be stricken by some malady which we cannot cure. Even the resources of the Caduceus may not develop a technique in time to save us; years of study may be necessary. We know that such things have happened. If now that this venture is real and imminent in our minds, some of you may wish to withdraw; you may do so without prejudice. Ample replacements are available. This is the last chance."

A SILENCE followed, in which Ilrai jotted down another entry in his interminable notes. The faint sound of scribbling annoyed Counselor Sarrasen. Ilrai wrote:

*I have seen little of this Earthling Sarrasen on the outward voyage. The absolute impregnability of his mind fascinates me. It is said that he harbors an unfaltering antipathy toward my race; certainly I have found him invariably aloof. Perhaps he will be more approachable after we have landed.*

"Since no one speaks to the contrary, we shall cast off at once," ordered Sarrasen. "Go to your stations."

The plug of the air-lock was a huge cylinder transverse to the tunnel, pierced by a tube. When the interior of the tunnel had been exhausted to a high vacuum the cylinder rotated smoothly, brought the tube into alignment with the tunnel, and the *Hermes* glided through into the star-dusted black in a transient, misty puff of residual air-vapor and ice-crystals. She departed silently, driven by a space-warp mosaic—in less



technical terms, by an invisible sheath of overlapping artificial gravitational fields under individual micro-control. The field-strengths could be varied over a range of twenty Earth-gravities, ten plus to ten minus—a relatively low velocity job.

Hooded instrument-lights glowed in the shadowy navigation-room, irradiated the hands of Counselor Sarrasen as they moved among the levers of the control-table. He was strapped to his seat in anticipation of a rough passage. On either side of him, also strapped in place, were Sancabriel his navigator and Himberling the chief pathologist, each capable of taking the helm if need arose. The eyes of all three were fixed on the conning-screen—a field of black quartered by luminous cross-hairs and powdered with stars like carelessly-strewn handfuls of shining sand. The globe of a sapphire sun dominated the field, etched the three intent faces in tones of blue against the semi-obscurity.

"Azuran—our future sun for the rest of our lives, perhaps," quietly remarked Sarrasen.

"First time I've seen it like

this," Himberling observed. "I haven't looked outside since the first week out of Alcorhaven. Beautiful corona—like a textbook picture of a magnetic field. This shows it in reduced intensity, of course."

"I should hope so!" returned the helmsman. "The screen couldn't reproduce its full intensity in the first place. It's a terrifically active star. We'll have no naked-eye views of it until we're under cover of an atmosphere—if the clouds ever break during the day. It built up an enormous static charge on the Caduceus and we're carrying part of that charge with us. Give me the bow televisor, Himberling."

WITH A CLICK, the picture was transformed and a planetary crescent appeared, close at hand and immense, fleecy with the texture of clouds, drenched with a soft celestial blue. A pinpoint sparkling of perpetual lightnings animated it from cusp to cusp. The dark part of the sphere was visible as a fragile-seeming veil of dim turquoise. Riding close above the curved rim of this shadowy veil was another,



smaller crescent, a bright sickle of blue quicksilver.

"And it's down on the chart as AL237!" exclaimed Sarra-sen.

"I didn't know that it has a satellite," remarked Himber-ling.

The *Hermes* built up her down-drag to five gravities plus, then went neutral and coasted. The planet now loomed so enormous that only a small part of the dark side was visible on the conning-screen, but with a still obvious convexity.

"There must be a permanent auroral sheath under us in the high atmosphere," observed the Counselor. "It fogs the details. I haven't seen a continent or a big ocean on this side—just hundreds of islands. Himber-ling, cut in a filter and see if we can get rid of part of this blue veil. Then intensify the image some more."

The conning-screen assumed a bluish-green tinge and the blurred archipelago became sharper in outline—dark masses on a slightly paler background.

"Head-braces!" ordered Sar-

rasen. "I'm going to decelerate."

THE THREE men slipped on helmets and chin-straps which were anchored to the high-backed seats. The helmsman flipped levers, began the slow turning of a dial, and the *Hermes* became negatively gravitating.

Instantly the three men were gripped by a force which sought to tear them from their steel-framed chairs and hurl them against the control-table. Their retaining straps creaked and their heart-beats thudded in their ears.

"There's an odd sort of marking!" exclaimed Sancabriel sharply, his eyes fixed on the screen. "It's too symmetrical to be natural!"

The screen was almost entirely filled by the image of a large island. To the unaided human eye it would have been shrouded in darkness but the amplifying televisor rendered its topography dimly visible by reflected moonlight. At the head of an estuary in the upper right-hand quadrant of the screen a feebly luminous spot had appeared, circular in shape,



with a regularly scalloped circumference. It suggested the outline of a conventionalized chrysanthemum. As the *Hermes* plummeted nearer, the likeness became even more startling. Telescopic enlargement revealed an internal structure of pale-colored lines enclosing darker areas; specifically, they formed concentric zones of semicircular arcs—a precise representation of the over-lapping petals of a composite flower.

"To show this large, at our distance, it must be at least one hundred miles across," hazarded Sarrcabriel.

**A** SHRILL whine sang through the hull of the *Hermes*.

"First contact with atmosphere," observed Counselor Sarrasen. "We have nearly ceased falling. Now the jockeying begins."

The "jockeying" process was rather like a descent in an elevator. The *Hermes* would fall under positive gravity until her velocity and air-friction mounted unduly, then would go slightly negative for a few seconds, then positive again.

In the high stratosphere, the vessel's huge static charge produced visible effects. She became enveloped in a nimbus of pale apple-green fire which fluttered from her double keel in ever-lengthening downward pennants. Searching auroral fingers rose up to meet them. As she dropped lower, the normally calm nocturnal atmosphere around her began to churn with unaccustomed commotion. During the intervals when portions of her enveloping gravitational mosaic were negative, air was forcibly repelled in those directions, rushed in shrieking from others and set up an atmospheric maelstrom. By the time she had dropped to a three-mile altitude, the vessel was the nucleus of a vivid thunderstorm. She careened and plunged, while the clouds boiled around her and enmeshed her in a net of lightning. The bolts raked her impervious sheathing from stem to stern, spouted from her salient points in sheets of crashing flame.

When the synthetic storm had exhausted its first violence the *Hermes* drifted downward in a deluge of rain and hail, her



apparent weight adjusted to slightly exceed her air-buoyancy.

"We're landing blind, just as if we had come down on the daylight side," grumbled Sarrasen, divesting himself of his safety-straps. "This planet has a very touchy atmosphere. I never saw a ship stir up such a tempest while making port on Alcorhaven. What's it like under us, Sancabriel?"

Sancabriel probed the cloudy depths with the echo-beam and reported, "Flat as a table-top. We must be over water."

**T**HE *HERMES* first descended on a barely-submerged mud-flat, into which she began to sink with Gargantuan slobbering noises. To lift herself out she cautiously went negative. This maneuver hurled back water, mud, and boulders in a foaming elliptical tidal wave which returned, rumbling and frothing, when she went positive again, found and lowered herself into deeper water flowing smoothly and swiftly. A triad of bulges below the water-line at her stern opened up and broke out propellers. Another bulge on her shield-

deck yawned apart and protruded a searchlight as she came about into the current and dropped anchor. The space-shields descended, whirring, from her observation ports.

"We'll ride here until the weather clears and decide on our next move," announced Counselor Sarrasen as he followed the disclosures of the searchlight beam with his binoculars, through the thick siliroid of a port. The beam was streaked with diamond darts of slackening rain. "I'd say we're on a river. There's one bank. And I suppose that's vegetation, though it looks more like a forest of oversize sponges. Porous masses. Did you ever see such a malignant shade of green? Let's have a look at the port side."

The light-beam swung through half a turn and the observers moved across the navigation-room to another port.

"Do you see what I see?" demanded Sancrabriel.

An extraordinary barrier reared itself along the river's edge, its foundations planted in the water. It was the color of antique weather-beaten ivory,



green-stained near water-level, pock-marked and pitted like a termite-eaten timber. Razor-edged spikes and bayonets of glassy stuff projected from its summit in a formidable fringe, which reflected sparks and sprays of light. The beam followed the structure along the river, found where it turned inland, mounted a ridge and passed over the crest.

"It's a wall, and it didn't just grow there," declared Himerling. "And whoever or whatever put it there was bent on keeping something out, something which was expected to come from this side."

### III

THE LIGHT-beam had been extinguished. Insensibly the darkness around the *Hermes* took on an indigo tinge, a growing premonition of un-Earthly moonlight which struggled through the dissolving clouds. With the passing of those clouds, the river—its banks forested with spongy domes—and the spike-crowned wall became an insubstantial fantasy in ethereal blue, as remote from reality as

Nirvana. The bright cerulean moon, nearing the full, rode in a sky like a theatrical backdrop—luminous blue-violet filmed over by an auroral haze which concealed all but the greater stars.

Counselor Sarrasen again had assembled his company in the mess-room, whose portholes looked across the blue-lit waters toward the enigmatic wall.

"Tomorrow, after we have rested, our work begins," he was saying. "Under no conditions is anyone to leave ship unprotected by safety-suits until we know more about the effects of our new atmosphere. And until we are more familiar with conditions on this world, those who go out must not venture beyond..."

An overhead communicator clicked and Sancabriel spoke from the navigation-room, where he had remained on watch. "Something's coming over the ridge. You can see it from down there. It's making a ghastly noise. I'll cut you in on the outside mike."

There was a general movement to the portholes as a deep-throated, lugubrious sound is-



sued from the communicator. It might have been called either mooing or groaning. The lights in the mess room were hurriedly switched off. Sarrasen still carried his binoculars slung over his shoulder and made haste to train them on the skyline of the ridge.

Near the horizon, the violet-blue sky brightened to a lighter zone of blue-green, and against this zone of brightness was silhouetted what appeared to be the swaying neck and expanded hood of a giant cobra, featureless save for a row of four silver-blue, luminous eyes. A tall, sharp horn rose from the creature's head like an obelisk.

**T**HE *HERMES'* light-beam leaped across the water, impinged upon this apparition, disclosed a craggy head and columnar neck encased in green-black jointed armor with a coppery iridescence. What had seemed to be an expanded hood revealed itself as a pair of flexible arms, tightly coiled against the armored neck just below the head. The creature hurriedly unfurled these arms, shaded its eyes against the glare with frog-fingered, unhu-

man hands in an oddly human gesture and began to advance stiffly, mechanically, as if fascinated by the intense light.

"It's half as high as the wall!" exclaimed Sancabriel. "Here comes the rest of it."

*How high is the wall?* thought Counselor Sarrasen.

The body of the beast was not unlike that of a great armor-plated caterpillar furnished with five pairs of stumpy, elephantine legs. In the intervals between its dismal groaning a harsh panting was audible, like the laboring of giant lungs.

"That other sound isn't what you think it is," Sancabriel declared. "Our ten-legged friend ashore has nothing to do with it. It's from another direction—inland, toward the wall, and it's growing louder. Something else is astir. If I'm not mistaken it's creeping along in the shadow of the wall. We'll have a look."

The light-beam swung toward the wall and played along the portion which extended back from the river, then halted suddenly.

A dome of steel surmounted by a turret was lurching forward on tractor treads, close to



the base of the wall. Twin jets of steam spurted rhythmically from its underbody, and a thin cloud of pale vapor trailed in its wake.

Since it was no longer held in thrall by the *Hermes*' searchlight, the armored decapod now became aware of the clanking, hissing newcomer and charged upon it with guttural whooping, running with surprising agility upon its short legs. When a headlong crash seemed imminent, the steel turret rotated slightly and spat out a roaring jet of steam which enveloped the monster's head in a billowing white cloud. It recoiled from this assault, humping its body into an arch which lifted its middle pairs of feet from the ground, and pawed frantically at its head with its serpentine arms. Then it turned, pounded up the slope and over the ridge.

**T**HE ONLOOKERS aboard the *Hermes* turned thoughtful eyes upon each other.

"This complicates matters," commented Humberling, who stood beside Sarrasen. "We'll have to come to an understanding with whatever things built

that machine before we can go on with our work. I'd like to see what's at the wheel."

Humberling's curiosity did not go long unsatisfied. The lumbering vehicle crept down to the water's edge, turned broadside to the *Hermes*, and stopped. A door opened in the turret and a dark figure crawled out, stood erect on the dome. For a moment, no one quite comprehended what they saw since they had expected some bizarre, unfamiliar creature.

"It's a man, a human being!" came Sancabriel's voice from the communicator. "Or is it? Is there such a thing as a black human being?"

Ilrai, who stood at the port-hole beyond Humberling, was aware that the same question was disturbing many of the other minds about him, and so broadcast a thought.

"It is indeed true that what we see is a man," thought Ilrai. "A considerable proportion of the terrestrial human population is of the black variety, and have added their own unique contribution to Earth's culture. It is only because the human race has expanded so far and so



rapidly that you have never heard of them, or have forgotten what you may have heard."

"Ilrai is right. We're spreading out too fast," affirmed Himberling when he had relayed Ilrai's remarks verbally to Counselor Sarrasen, who listened with cool politeness. "At least a third of this company have never heard of the black race."

"I have heard of black men but I've never seen one," returned the Counselor. "There are none on Alcorhaven. And there's no record of any previous landing on this world. We must go to this stranger and question him."

#### IV

**H**IMBERLING and two others emerged on the shield-deck of the *Her-mes*. The others were Ilrai and a girl named Rodney Ames, who possessed a specialized knowledge of terrestrial dialects. Possible difficulties were foreseen in conversing with the stranger but, as was soon discovered, Rodney's linguistic services were not needed. Ilrai had reported only slight suc-

cess in attempting a mental contact.

"I receive no impression save that of great emotional turmoil, and he does not respond to my efforts," the Martian informed Himberling. "He may be only slightly receptive."

The three were clad in airtight transparent safety-suits filled with oxygen cylinders. The head-pieces were mere tough, transparent films stretched over a light framework—since they were subject to no inequality in pressure—which permitted ordinary conversation at close range between non-telepaths without the encumbrance of telephonic apparatus. As a routine precaution, all were armed with small-caliber weapons intermediate between a pistol and a rifle, firing explosive rocket-bullets.

Strapped around their bodies were individualized adaptations of the space-warp drive known as levitation harness, which could reduce the apparent weight of the wearer and his equipment almost to zero, so that he was rendered air-buoyant if desire. Gravitationally, he became equivalent to a human-shaped vacuum-bubble



in the air. Locomotion with this gadget consisted of a series of immense leaps, or a sort of air-swimming with collapsible batwings attached to the arms and body. Athletic aviation of this sort was practical only in relatively calm weather such as then prevailed.

Leaping in rapid succession the trio launched themselves from the shield-deck, arched like blue moths across the intervening water, guided themselves with dexterous flapping toward their objective. They descended a little distance from the perambulating dome and advanced with guns held discreetly at the ready, but were reassured by the behavior of the man from the machine.

He was trembling uncontrollably. When Humberling stepped into the garish spotlight of the *Hermes'* beam the stranger's legs went limp under him and he tumbled clumsily to his knees. In this posture he shambled toward Humberling, fell forward and clutched him around the hips.

**H**IMBERLING was momentarily nonplussed by the stranger's eyes, which

searched his own with a desperate incredulity. They were deep-set in a face which might have been carved from teak, seamed with wrinkles like gullies, under a skull-fitting growth of grizzled kinky hair. The stranger's lips moved but no words came forth.

"Here now! What's your trouble? Pull yourself together," said Humberling uncomfortably.

In response came two words, spoken hoarsely: "How long?"

"He's a castaway!" ejaculated Rodney. "He wants to know how long he's been here!"

"A castaway, careering around in a steam-driven machine?" rejoined Humberling skeptically. Then, "Who are you? When did you land?"

"Mattawomba. In 2583. From the land of Kenia, on Earth. How long is that?"

"In 2583!" repeated Rodney. "Why—that's thirty-two years ago!"

"Only thirty-two? I couldn't tell. Time is different here."

"His mind is a whirl of strange pictures," Ilrai thought to Humberling. "I cannot yet piece them together. He is un-



aware of my thoughts—his brain has not been trained to listen.”

“I can’t get through to him either,” Himberling thought back. “This will have to be a verbal interview.”

With Rodney’s assistance, Himberling raised the shock-weakened Mattawomba to his feet and led him over to the machine, where they seated themselves on a projecting flange of the tread-casing. Ilrai folded up his long, double-jointed legs and sat before them on the ground. The *Hermes’* beam, shining upon him from the rear, irradiated his translucent body like an image of cloudy, many-colored glass, revealed the shadowy outlines of his skeleton.

“Now tell us how you came here,” continued Himberling. “Was there no one with you?”

“**I WAS ALONE,**” said Mattawomba. “In a lifeboat of the *Marco Polaris*. Sudden death came to the ship. The captain died on the bridge. The pilot died in the helm.”

“The *Marco Polaris!*” Ilrai flashed to Himberling. “I know

that ship. It was lost in transit.”

“What do you mean by sudden death?” demanded Himberling, professionally interested. “What was it like?”

“We can go into that afterwards,” declared Rodney. “Go on.”

“Some died while they ran to the lifeboats,” Mattawomba went on. “No one came with me to mine. I was afraid to wait, so I went alone. This was the only planet in sight. I knew scarcely anything about navigation. So I came down very crookedly and crashed in the Outlands. I broke my wrist and three ribs and my watch. If I’d had my watch...”

“What do you mean by the Outlands?” asked Rodney.

“Out there,” said Mattawomba, and gestured widely away from the wall toward the ridge and the river.

“Why was the *Marco Polaris* leaving Earth?” inquired Himberling, prompted by Ilrai.

“Because the people in it were weary of Earth,” Mattawomba responded. “Life was changing strangely. Everything was in upheaval. Everywhere men and women seemed driven



to throw themselves into some great scheme to change things. There was no more peace, no more solitude. Then we read in a book, in a spaceman's tale, about a world of Polaris. They said it was a *Perfect World*. It was written by a Martian named Ilrai..."

Ilrai started, his invincible equanimity shattered for the first time in years.

"That report was a bit premature," observed Himberling, smiling covertly. "It was rather hastily called Eden, as I remember. The first colonists were overwhelmed by spectacular landscapes and a wonderful climate, but it proved to be no better and no worse than Earth."

"Pardon the interruption," Rodney broke in, "but I think that some more local wild life is coming our way. I've heard it twice and I don't like its voice. It was louder the second time."

An attentive silence followed. Then the blue serenity of the night was sliced across by a shrill, hooting wail. The echoes ran around the horizon like a vast cry of despair.

V

RODNEY, Himberling, and Ilrai leaped to their feet and cocked their guns. Mattawomba remained seated, regarded them blankly.

A pencil of orange light wheeled up into the sky from behind the ridge, swept down to a horizontal position as the light-source leaped into view on the summit of the wall where it crested the rise. The light was rushing along the top of the wall toward the mystified watchers, accompanied by a harsh, throbbing hiss.

Rodney cried, "Now what?"

The nearest portion of the wall was no more than a hundred yards away, and that which now sped by upon it left Himberling and Rodney transfixed in inarticulate amazement. A wheeled, elongated contrivance of steel offered a fleeting glimpse of rounded metallic sides, hurried mechanical oscillations and pulsating steam-jets, to be followed by a clicking, clangorous succession of box-like carriages bearing strange inscriptions upon their corrugated sides: *Santa Fe*, *Lackawanna*, *Missouri Pacific*,



and *Fruit Growers Express*.

The steam-spitting mechanism uttered a demoniac shriek as it passed, and rumbled on into the night, became two eyes of light—one red, one green—receding along the wall. Came another cry, remote despairing, and was engulfed in blue silence.

Himberling drew a deep breath and inquired simply, "What was that?"

From a momentary state of rigidity, Mattawomba passed into a paroxysmal abandonment to laughter. He was racked and shaken by whooping merriment. He slapped his knees, rocked his body in an agony of mirth, opened his mouth until it threatened to eclipse his face, exposed his teeth and tongue in unobscured entirety. He laughed until he wept. Neither Himberling nor Rodney had ever seen or heard such laughter.

"My little locomotive!" gasped Mattawomba, quaking with exhaustion and wiping his eyes. "You were afraid of my little locomotive!"

"**L**OCOMOTIVE! Your little locomotive!" ejaculat-

ed Himberling, and paused helplessly. "Suppose we begin all over again."

"But it *was* little," Rodney asserted suddenly. "Take another look at the wall. We overestimated its size and distance when we saw it at first. It can't be more than thirty or forty feet high. And that would make that—that mechanical nightmare..."

"It would make it..." began Himberling, and eyed the wall. "Why, it wasn't any bigger than—than a big working model of—of what? Come, Mattawomba, tell us what goes on here."

"On Earth, I taught sidereal linguistics, the comparative philology of the known worlds," replied Mattawomba. "At the University of Kenia. In my studies I re-discovered the ancient jargon of Earthly railroading. Do you know what a railroad is?"

Himberling searched his memory, received a mental prod from Ilrai.

"They taught us in school on Alcorhaven," he responded, "that 'goods and passengers once were conveyed in steam-driven vehicles running on



rails.' So that's what we saw! But how can there be a railroad on this world, with Earthly names on the cars—like 'Missouri Pacific,' for instance? Where do you come in?"

"I began by whittling railroads out of wood," continued Mattawomba. "Then I made them from brass and steel, complete and functional in every detail. It was my pastime. When we set out on the *Marco Polaris* I took with me a whole microfilm library on railroads. It was the only thing I carried into the lifeboat."

"So after you crashed, you crawled out with a wrist and three ribs broken," observed Rodney, "and built a railroad."

"I haven't told you the rest of it," returned Mattawomba with a toothful grin. "The Wall-Makers built their own railroads, after I showed them how. They already knew about steam-power and had invented a steam-driven road-carriage like this one we're sitting on. But they hadn't thought of rails, or wheels with flanges."

"The Wall-Makers!" repeated Humberling. "I knew it! Where there is a wall like this,

there must be builders. It couldn't just grow."

"But it did," asserted Mattawomba. "It's alive."

"What?" Humberling and Rodney spoke together.

"You might call it a sort of dry-land coral," Mattawomba explained. "The Wall-Makers cause it to grow wherever, and in whatever size and shape they want. The walls keep the Dinopods out."

"The...Dinopods?" questioned Humberling.

"The Dinopods. It's just a name I invented. I named this world Kenia, also. It seemed—well—it seemed a good name."

"On the chart it goes, by virtue of thirty-two years' priority. But what are Dinopods?"

"The lords of the Outlands. You must have seen one. The one I scalded with steam."

**R**ODNEY had been grappling with a problem and now voiced her perplexity.

"You say that these Wall-Makers had already invented machines like this one," she began, tapping the steel tread-casing. "Then you say that they have built railroads like the one on the wall. But those



cars were miniatures. If I stood alongside one I believe I could lean my elbows on it. What good is a railroad on that scale?"

"This is my personal transport, especially made for me. It's a kind of tank—but probably you've never heard of that. The Wall-Makers are about so tall." (He extended his hand, indicated a height of two feet.) "The railroads are built in proportion. It happens that on this world the dominant race is small—small compared to man, small compared to the general scale of things about them."

"When may we meet these—these pygmy engineers?"

"When you wish. I came partly to arrange a meeting, partly to ask that you take me back to Kenia—the real Kenia. We saw your ship coming down in the storm, on fire with lightning."

"I'm afraid you'll have to wait awhile before you can return," Humberling said, an apologetic note in his voice. "Under the best of conditions, we ourselves will be here for years. When we do go, it will

be to Alcorhaven, not Earth, and our communications with Earth are very irregular. When we set out, it had been five years since the last mail."

IT NOW became necessary to acquaint Mattawomba with the functions of the Inter-World Sanitary Service, an organization regarding which he had only the sketchiest information.

"But I've lived here for thirty-two years," protested Mattawomba, "and I've enjoyed the best of health. I'm your Number One Guinea Pig. I'll admit that I made myself very sick several times before I knew what were the right things to eat, but as for a real infection—never!"

"Infection! I'm glad you mentioned that," Humberling rejoined. "You haven't told us what this 'sudden death' was that struck the *Marcó Polaris*."

"There was a panic. It was hard to find out just what was happening. But it was called, I think, Cassiopeian gangrene."

Rodney and Humberling involuntarily moved away from



Mattawomba, cast startled glances at each other.

"And you got away alive!" exclaimed Humberling incredulously.

"There's a latent form," Rodney observed. "Very likely that's how it came aboard the *Marco Polaris*."

"You mean..." began Mattawomba, and stopped.

"The kindest thing I can do is to be brutally frank," began Humberling hesitantly. "Presumably you have been exposed to Cassiopeian gangrene. It is one of the most devilishly erratic diseases known, and may lie dormant in an unsuspecting host for an amazingly long time. The fact that you survived renders you subject to suspicion. Even if it were but the faintest of suspicions, before you can be allowed to return to Earth, or even to Alcorhaven, you must undergo the most complete and searching examinations known to medical science. In fact, we and all the crew of the *Hermes*—the ship itself—are from this moment under ironclad redoubled quarantine on Kenia. We may be here for life."

## VI

A FRANTIC warning from Sancabriel sounded in Humberling's brain. The beam of the *Hermes'* searchlight whirled away from the group on the river bank, leaped up the slope of the ridge, and revealed a long rank of Dinopods creeping stealthily over its summit in open formation. The line was so extended that Sancabriel could not hold the beam upon more than one individual at a time.

"You go back to the ship!" commanded Mattawomba. "I'll get through."

He ran up the curved side of the dome on a built-in ladder, dived into the turret, slammed the door.

"Tell him to get out of that contraption!" Sancabriel flashed to Humberling. "We're unlimbering the forward guns. I don't know how these brutes' minds work, but if I were in their place I'd surround that machine and overturn it, steam or no steam. And if they surround it, we can't shoot at them without blowing it up along with them."



But Mattawomba's traveling fortress was already rumbling on its way in a cloud of steam and oil-fumes.

Now that they had been discovered, the phalanx of Dinopods thundered down the slope like stampeding elephants. For the first time, the party on the shore appreciated their true size; each shell-plated neck was as thick as the body of a horse.

Then the guns of the *Hermes* spoke, and apparently-simultaneous explosions blasted three smoking craters in the hillside. One Dinopod was decapitated by a shell.

**THE CONCUSSION** staggered the remaining Dinopods, and the trio at the river's edge—who had already rendered themselves practically weightless—were blown backwards over the water. The headless victim of the salvo blundered onward with stubborn vitality, rammed against the wall. Then a prodigy took place: The wall came to life.

Out of the honeycomb of dark pits in the pock-marked barrier there arose legions of long-stemmed polyps like giant

sea-anemones, rosy and beautiful under the *Hermes'* restless beam, their tentacles tipped with curved black fangs. They seized the thrashing body hungrily, held it by sheer force of numbers, pried off its plates of armor with their talons, and proceeded to tear it to shreds. The polyps actually engaged in this demolition passed on the morsels to their more distant fellows, as an ever-widening area of the wall awakened to activity. In an appallingly short space of time they had reduced their prize to a tattered skeleton and withdrew into their lairs.

Recovering from their temporary disorganization, the attackers surrounded Mattawomba even as Sancabriel had foreseen. The revolving turret belched steam like an angry dragon. A quartet of Dinopods succeeded in laying hold of the machine and tilting it sidewise before they were driven off. Immediately the turret spouted an upward column of steam and uttered a deafening hoot. It seemed that answering hoots mingled with the ensuing echoes.



ILRAI AND his companions were still hovering above the river and drifting backward toward the *Hermes* from the force of the explosions.

"Perhaps these little weapons of ours may be of some slight assistance in this encounter," thought the Martian as he drove himself upward with a couple of vigorous flaps and leveled his gun at a Dinopod, which was circling in toward the steam-enshrouded dome.

The recoil of Ilrai's shot threw him halfway to the *Hermes*. The red streak of his rocket-bullet, enhanced to crimson in the blue moonshine, stabbed the broad back of the Dinopod, exploded there into a blood-red star of flame.

And now the voyagers from Alcorhaven beheld another one of Kenia's grim surprises. The flare of the bursting bullet continued to burn, spread over the Dinopod's back in slow rivulets of fire. The creature uttered a dreadful cry, twisted its long neck backward, beat at the flame with its hands—and the hands themselves ignited.

"Great balls of fire!" shouted Humberling with unpremeditated aptness. "The thing's combustible!"

"I'm sick!" choked Rodney, turned and fled through the air to the *Hermes*.

The other Dinopods were stopped in their tracks by the spectacle of the slow transformation of their comrade into a writhing, horrendously vocal conflagration. Then they fled up the hillside in wild retreat.

The retreat became a rout when they found themselves confronted by a compact battle-line of quarter-size replicas of Mattawomba's machine, sweeping down from the ridge to a hooting accompaniment of shrill steam-sirens and preceded by a wall of live steam. The battle-line became a crescent, drove them headlong into the river. Their towering horns plowed desperately across the blue-sparkling current, passed close under the bows of the *Hermes*.

Ashore, the now-motionless Dinopod burned down to a smoldering patch of red coals, bones and all.



## VII

**I**N THE QUIET of his cabin aboard the *Hermes Ilrai* flattened out the first page of a new journal with his big rubbery fingers and proceeded to fill it with vertical columns of twisted Martian script.

*In a sense I am responsible for our predicament. When I published the Eden story I was careful to point out that it had come to me by a long and devious route, passing from world to world by word of mouth and probably gaining much in the telling. It never occurred to me that Earth might harbor a sufficient number of dreamers to embark upon such an ill-advised pilgrimage as the Marco Polaris expedition, merely on the strength of that story. Of the Marco Polaris I heard only that it set out with a party of colonists and vanished without trace. Now that story has trapped us on Kenia. We were warned by our leader that unpredictable events might bring about such a situation, but I think that very few of us really believed that it might happen so.*

*We have seen much of these Wall-Makers in the days since our first meeting with Mattawomba. The Earthlings are individualists with a genius for things mechanical. The Martians are individualists with a genius for things metaphysical. Both learned the lesson of unity only at the price of bloodshed and battle. But the Kenians, living in what is to them a giant world, possess an innate devotion to unity. They could not have survived and become what they are otherwise. Their peculiar genius is biological; they mold living things to their ends as the Earthlings mold the inorganic world. Until relatively recent times theirs was—let us say—a biocultural civilization without machines. They were ripe for a mechanical era when Mattawomba arrived.*

**T**HE ENTIRE race of Wall-Makers is congregated in one vast community behind the living walls. As their numbers increased, they made successive additions to the circumference of this area, which now measures one hundred forty



miles in diameter. Only the outer walls are alive, kept so by feeding upon the organisms floating in internal circulating streams of water sucked up from the sea and whatever incidental creatures are snared by the polyps. Mattawomba has fancifully christened the community Chicagua, since his researches have revealed that this terrestrial city once constructed railroads on elevated tracks. The symmetrical network of walls—a growth of ages—was sighted from the Hermes during its descent on Kenia.

The Wall-Makers themselves are strangely reduced, delicate variations of the Dinopod pattern. If one can imagine a plump, worm-like being, standing with the forward half of its body erect and armored with the jointed carapace of an armadillo, he will have a general idea of the Wall-Maker anatomy. The carapace is mottled with tortoise-shell markings. Like the Dinopods, they possess twelve limbs but stand on eight only. The other four are grasping organs, multi-fingered as the fronds of a fern. Four opalescent eyes

peer from under a vizor-like projection of the head-shell. The fabric of their minds is puzzling, cryptic but friendly; I can plumb only the shallows of their thoughts.

The continual encroachments of the Kenians on the surrounding Outlands are resented by the creatures which Mattawomba appropriately calls the Dinopods—the thunder-footed. I know of no exact parallel to these beasts elsewhere. They are less intelligent than the Wall-Makers, more intelligent than the elephants of Earth or the araganth of Alcorhaven. They have hands, and a barbaric type of culture. I am told that they have communities of their own, but these I have not seen.

Possibly I am mistaken, but I feel that Counselor Sarrasen was antagonized by my shooting of a Dinopod. At least his manner seemed to convey such an attitude. He was not concerned about the one which was slain by a shell from the Hermes.

**A**N ENTRY in Counselor Sarrasen's private log verifies the disapproval which



Ilrai suspected. In it he disparages Ilrai's exploit as "sheer exhibitionism," claiming that the patrol of Wall-Maker machines was already visible on the crown of the ridge at the moment when Ilrai fired his shot. He avers that the cremation of the Dinopod violated the established policy which prohibits "wanton and unreasonable destruction of fauna." Other unrelated entries reveal that Counselor Sarrasen cherished a secret pride in his prowess as a hunter of big game—for scientific purposes. There may or may not be a connection between these facts.

Sarrasen also expresses himself regarding Ilrai's "Eden story" in much the same words as the Martian, with an added angry comment that Ilrai would do well to make sure of his facts before bursting into print.

### VIII

MATTAWOMBA was primarily a teacher and student of languages. Within the field of his model-building hobby he was

well-versed in the theory of steam-engines and the construction of railroad equipment; beyond that, his technical knowledge was nil. But contact even with this small fraction of terrestrial science, together with the African's tantalizingly general descriptions of other Earthly achievements, had fired the Wall-Makers with an avid desire for more. Neither of the parties to this interchange of ideas was physiologically capable of acquiring the speech of the other, but early in his residence on Kenia Mattawomba had mastered the written language of the Wall-Makers.

So it was through Mattawomba that the *Hermes* was invited to shift her moorings from the river to an anchorage inside the walls, far from the Dinopods—who had developed a disagreeable urge to pelt the ship with boulders and gobbets of decomposing offal, as was already their custom to throw at trains. Her new berth was the arm of a lake, adjacent to a railroad terminal. The terminal shops constantly grew more serviceable for certain minor



needs of the *Hermes*, under the expert advice of Sancabriel and others.

After checks and re-checks a hundredfold repeated, Counselor Sarrasen admitted what he scarcely dared to hope—the atmosphere of Kenia was safe. Safety-suits were ceremoniously discarded; the *Hermes* flung open her ports, and the voyagers inhaled heady drafts of the richly-oxygenated air, knew once again the feel of wind and rain. The ship admitted a delegation of Kenians, who inspected her from deepest hold to shield-deck, chirping and babbling with wonder.

On this epochal day, Mattawomba conferred with Counselor Sarrasen in the latter's cabin.

"In one way this may be good news to you—in another way it isn't," began Sarrasen, drawing luxuriously on a long-deferred cigaret of Alcorhavian tobacco (it burned very rapidly in the Kenian atmosphere). "There isn't the slightest doubt but you contracted Cassiopeian gangrene. Two things saved you: a high natural resistance and the fact that you made

Kenia in a hurry. This high-oxygen atmosphere inhibits the disease. You still have a slight latent infection of the spleen but the lesion is healing and it isn't contagious, and it never will be if you stay on Kenia. We can cure it, but it will take a long time. Even if we were permitted to send you back to Earth now—and could—you'd have to spend at least five years in an oxygen chamber after you got there, isolated in a remote Antarctica hospital. And we'll be here longer than that. We haven't done a tenth of what we know we must do."

**T**HE CREASES in Mattawomba's face seemed to deepen.

"I feared something like this," he said slowly. "But I shall have many things to do, and time will pass swiftly. Ilrai has been training me to listen with my brain, as he terms it. And there is something at the terminal shops which you must see."

At the mention of Ilrai's name, Counselor Sarrasen elevated one eyebrow and inhaled so strongly that his cigaret



emitted a shower of sparks and burned nearly to his lips. He hastily spat the glowing stub on the deck and ground it vindictively under his heel, as if Ilrai were responsible for the incident.

"Very well. Let's shove off," he curtly assented.

From the *Hermes* they came forth into the ultramarine dusk of the Kenian day, filled with the drumming roar of a solid downpour of rain and the unremitting roll of thunder. The clouds rippled with lightning, and their infrequent transitory rifts were stabbed through by steel-blue broadswords of sunlight.

The two men splashed across a wide field among close-set ranks of five-foot spheres, glistening darkly through the rain—the swift-growing vegetable bladders which secrete the fuel-oil of Kenia. Beyond this they picked their way through a network of narrow tracks, stepped cautiously between miniature ten-foot tank-cars which stood in long files upon the sidings.

Sarrasen paused and regarded the lights of the shops, a watery blue-white blur through

the descending torrent.

"Have the Kenians invented a new kind of oil-lamp?" he demanded. "They were never so bright before."

"You'll see," grinned Mattawomba.

Stooping through a rugged archway of coralline material—dead and devoid of polyps—the Earthlings stood with their heads nearly touching the roof and surveyed a brilliantly-lighted labyrinth of clamorous little machines, spinning pulleys, and flapping belts. Scores of quadruple eyes glanced up expectantly from their work.

"Arc lights!" cried Sarrasen. "Who did this?"

"Several people," Mattawomba informed him, grinning delightedly. "The Wall-Makers, Ilrai and I. Now we can have motors and do away with all these belts and pulleys. On Earth, I got all the electrical devices for my models ready-made. When I came, we tore down all the gadgets in the life-boat and still knew nothing when we had ruined them. But Ilrai brought at least a ton of books and microfilms with him on the *Hermes*. He dug up some stuff on elementary elec-



trical engineering, dictated telepathically while I wrote it out in the Kenian tongue. San-cabriel was in it, too; he helped with the mathematical part and the shop-work. We've made a direct-current dynamo of sorts, but it does work."

**B**UT COUNSELOR SARRASEN said nothing. He stood quite still, his face a mask, while the water dribbled from his rain-suit. The glow of pleasure slowly faded from Mattawomba's eyes and he became crestfallen.

"What's the matter?" inquired Mattawomba anxiously. "Isn't it all right?"

"I did not order this to be done," observed the Counselor icily. "Unfortunately we cannot revoke this technical information which already has been released. In releasing it, you have committed a flagrant violation of general policy. The regulations explicitly prohibit the very thing that you have done. They clearly forbid us to supply scientific information to any species capable of using it before we are thoroughly familiar with its temperament and mental attitudes."

"But I *am* thoroughly familiar with the Wall-Makers!" protested Mattawomba. "What are you driving at?"

Both turned at the sound of Himberling's voice behind them.

"As I recall the wording of the regulations," said Himberling, "they forbid 'the disclosure of the theory and methods of production of any lethal weapon, implement of war, explosive, toxic gas, incendiary device, or any other socially destructive information.' They also say something about 'means of navigation in vacuo.' Are you going to tell us that you consider an arc-light an implement of war or a socially destructive influence?"

"You choose to be trivial," retorted Counselor Sarrasen. "Are you prepared to guarantee that from this innocent-seeming arc-light and the generator which activates it, these Wall-Makers will not go on to the incandescent bulb, the simple vacuum tube, the cyclotron, nuclear physics, the stereodyne, and the space-warp drive? Even our superior Martian friend admits that, so far,



he can understand only the simplest mental patterns of these beings. Can you see into their minds? Even if you could, could you be sure that you saw everything?"

"Suppose they do go on to these other things? What then?" countered Humberling.

"**THEY ARE** obviously a nimble-witted and inventive race, and quick to learn," responded the Counselor. "I presume that you have no forebodings as to what they will do when they escape from the confinement of these walls, occupy their world, and overrun the galaxy."

"Yes, I have no forebodings," affirmed Humberling stoutly. "Mattawomba's thirty-two years of association with the Wall-Makers give his opinions a weight that should outbalance all of ours put together. And as to their overrunning the galaxy, don't be foolish. We're doing quite a bit of overrunning ourselves, and there have been times and places when the galaxy didn't appreciate it."

"But our purposes are be-

nevolent!" ejaculated the scandalized Counselor.

"Are you hinting that the Kenians would ever be anything but benevolent?" boomed Mattawomba in a voice that was heard throughout the terminal.

"This is not a military organization, which for the first time I regret," Counselor Sarrasen remarked ominously. "We are all responsible adults, theoretically, and we know the regulations. But as field director of this survey I promise you that if any more technical information is given to the Wall-Makers I shall report for insubordination everyone who may be responsible, as soon as we have made port on Alcorhaven. Ilrai's case I shall present directly to the Bi-Planetary Governors."

"Cool off," advised Humberling. "You won't see Alcorhaven for again ten years. And as for preferring charges on Earth—well, you know how often the mail goes out. You won't even remember it by then."

He grasped Sarrasen by the arm.



"You need a walk in the rain," said Humberling. "I'm dissecting a Dinopod. It's a rare sight. You'll enjoy it."

Mattawomba squatted dejectedly between two axle-lathes, produced an affair like a flexible slate from a waterproof pouch at his belt—he disdained a rain-suit—and began a solemn written conversation with the Wall-Makers, who immediately surrounded him.

## IX

"I EXPECTED a whole Dinopod—this is just a head and neck," remonstrated Counselor Sarrasen. "And why did you break the horn?"

His Huntsman's eye perceived the grisly bulk as a damaged trophy. It lay under a low-vaulted pergola which had been grown, not built, illuminated by a pair of sizzling arc-lights. On every side were archways curtained by rain, opening on a world of crepuscular blue.

"I didn't break it," Humberling replied, flexing his fingers in his surgical gloves. "This

fellow did it himself, last night, in a fight to the finish with another gladiator. It was just outside the wall. You should have seen it. They wrestled and tore up the ground like a couple of power-shovels running amuck. He didn't win, as you might guess. When it was all over Mattawomba took me out in his tank and we severed this much and dragged it in. The remaining carcass was worthless—the Outlands scavengers had been at it."

"Where's the rest of the horn?"

"It was sticking in the victor's rump when I last saw it, and he was ringing the welkin about it. You had better put on a respirator. This odor doesn't seem so bad but it will lay you low if you breathe too much of it. Now here's something. This armor-plate, these bones—they're wood. Don't look so skeptical. Its incredibly tough and almost as hard as iron. But it's wood. The whole animal is oily and resinous inside. But it is an animal and not a plant—I guess."

"The horn also?"

"Yes, the horn is wood also."



I suppose it was rammed in between two other bones—we'll have to call them that—and something had to give. And here's another thing. I've dissected out an eye. Fixed lens, moveable retina. Very curious."

"You have surely made a wreck of this," lamented Sar-rasen, walking around the partly-dismembered head. "You should have another one, complete, to dissect in its entirety."

He found himself confronting Rodney, masked and gloved, who until then had been occupied with the muscles of a massive arm and hand on the other side of the huge cranium and completely hidden by the latter.

"I heard you," said Rodney, "and I know just what you're thinking. You'll go and bag a Dinopod for scientific purposes, and when we start work on it you'll claim the head because—you'll say—we've already had this one. Then you'll take it back to Alcorhaven and hang it on the wall in your quarters, opposite the araganth."

"It's an idea," returned Sar-rasen, unabashed.

"Why don't you?" urged Himberling, speaking across the snout of the Dinopod. "I think we all need and deserve a holiday. I'm taking mine right now, carving up this beast. For eighteen months I've seen nothing but slides and cultures and photographs and caged animals. Mattawomba will give you expert advice on organizing the hunt."

"THIS IS a map of Chica-gua," announced Mattawomba, unrolling a bulky scroll of vegetable parchment. He spread it upon a circular table of spongy, mineral material in the form of an inverted truncated cone, which had been caused to grow from the floor of the chamber he used as a work-room. Above it, a coralline stalactite supported a cluster of Kenian oil-lamps shaded by translucent marine shells which diffused a mellow orange light. The microfilm projector stood in an alcove. The walls were a museum of railroad models interspersed with files of mechanical drawings.



"It looks like a big flower," Rodney commented, bending over the map.

"A chrysanthemum, to be exact," amended Sarrasen. "We saw it from the *Hermes*, coming down."

"You'll notice this long straight wall extending thirty miles to the northwest and ending in a loop," Mattawomba continued. "That's the causeway I told you about. It's complete and the growth has been halted, except for the loop at the end, which is just beginning to grow. The loop is about seven miles across and encircles a mountain of iron ore. A four-track railway is already laid down along the causeway, and when the loop has reached its full height we'll extend the line and start taking out the iron. A clan of Dinopods formerly lived on the mountain. They're still incensed about being driven off, and have built themselves another kraal somewhere in the vicinity. At night, when the foraging parties come out, you shouldn't have much difficulty in locating a specimen. Usually they come up to the causeway and heave a few dornicks

at it, just on general principles. But I can't guarantee that you'll get your specimen after you bring it down. They carry away their dead and wounded."

"We'll fascinate them with a small portable searchlight," explained Sarrasen. "Then I'll select my Dinopod and pick it off at leisure with a Humboldt rifle—the same one I used for the araganth. It fires a steel-jacketed non-explosive bullet. Will you handle the light, Mattawomba?"

"I'll use a steam-jet in self-defense," replied Mattawomba with a grimace. "But this lying in wait and calculated slaughter—no, I'll have nothing to do with it except to provide advice, and transportation to the end of the causeway. Your purpose is legitimate enough, but just the same—count me out."

"Let me take the light; I'll be the decoy," volunteered Rodney. "But tell me this: How do you intend to bring back your Dinopod after you get it?"

"Heavy-duty levitation harness," answered Sarrasen. "You've seen it. On bales and crates when we load or unload



cargo. Four five-ton units should be enough to float a Dinopod. One of Mattawomba's locomotives will tow it in, like a captive balloon."

"Why don't you take one of the launches?" Rodney inquired, referring to certain aircraft auxiliaries of the *Hermes*.

"They're all out making surveys," the Counselor informed her. "None of them will return in time. We're going out tonight."

## X

UNDER A full moon, the Outlands had become a panorama of endlessly-variegated blues. Rodney was not yet sufficiently accustomed to these blue nights of Kenia to accept them as completely real; for her they still possessed a certain dream-like quality. She lay prone in a swaying, jolting ten-foot railway gondola, clutching the case of a portable spotlight. Counselor Sarrasen reclined in the other end of the car, his Humboldt rifle and its folded tripod across his knees. A scudding streamer of

oil-fumes and exhaust steam from the locomotive billowed overhead. Peering forward past the side of the tender and the spinning drivers, Rodney squinted against a barrage of pelting steam-droplets at four parallel pairs of rails which converged toward a dark blue butte on the horizon. Eight silvery-blue splashes of moonlight fled along the rails, keeping pace with the orange glow of the headlight. Four other gondolas and a caboose followed the first car, creaking and clanking; they carried rolls of heavy-duty levitation harness, Humberling, Sancabriel, others of the *Hermes'* company, and the Kenian train-crew. It was Humberling's intention to secure specimens of other nocturnal Kenian fauna after assisting in the transport of the Dinopod carcass.

"There must be another train ahead of us, near the end of the line," Rodney announced as they drew near the iron mountain. "I see two lights, red and green."

Sarrasen craned over the side of the gondola, scanned the two luminous dots, and



shook his head uncomprehendingly.

AT THE END of the causeway, the thirty-foot right-of-way expanded into a circular platform. The hunting-party drew up alongside another train consisting of a locomotive, two gondolas, and a caboose. Mattawomba was stretched out comfortably in a gondola, his head pillowed on his arms, contemplating the moon and smoking a cigaret—a luxury obtained from the *Hermes*—while he blew occasional smoke-rings for the edification of his Kenian train-crew.

"Why are you here?" inquired Counselor Sarrasen.

"I came out with Ilrai," replied Mattawomba, raising his head with his clasped hands.

"Ilrai!"

"Yes. He comes out here frequently to take pictures. The wild life is more plentiful than it is nearer to Chicagua. See! There goes one of his flashes."

A soundless white flare blinked among the northward ridges of the Outlands.

"Is he alone?"

"Why not? He's wearing levitation harness. He knows about your plans and is going to keep well away from the river."

"You mean the river that loops around the other side of Iron Mountain?"

"That's it. I want to tell you something about it. If you fly half a mile due north from here you'll come to a place where the Dinopods go down to grub around in the river-bottom. The shore is all trampled to a quagmire, and there are three islands opposite. There's another bed of mussels—that's not what they are, but one can call them that—about one mile upstream, under a bluff with a copse of sponge-trees at its foot."

THE CHEVAUX-DE-FRISE of horny spikes and blades along the rim of the circular platforms was broken at two points where the mountain-encircling loop branched off. At these points the causeway sloped steeply downward from its thirty-foot elevation, graded into northerly and southerly extensions entirely covered with the defensive polyyps. To



the Earthlings the embryonic walls suggested broad, slightly elevated beds of animated, pallid blue-white flowers.

Rodney and Counselor Sarrasen stood poised at the northerly break in the protective fringe, Rodney's spotlight was secured by straps around her neck and waist; the Counselor's gun and tripod were slung across his back, thereby leaving arms and hands free. They pressed the weight-control studs on their belts, leaped, flapped, and soared northward.

"There's the river and the three islands under us," said Rodney after an interval of leaping and soaring. "I'll sail around and look for Dinopods while you go down and set up your gun."

The huntsman found the trampled muddy shore as Mat-tawomba had foretold, and established himself on a knoll which commanded every approach. The back-plates of Dinopods—which slough off periodically—lay all about him.

Rodney's voice came to him through the radiophone headset which his telepathic deficiency made necessary.

"The forest is too thick around here," announced Rodney. "I'm following a couple of Dinopods now, but I can get only glimpses of them, down under the sponge-trees, and I haven't been able to get at them with the light at the right angle. Now they're coming out into a clearing under me. I'll catch their eye now—No! They saw one of Ilrai's flashes and went off that way to investigate. They're under the trees again."

Sarrasen fumed. He also had seen the flash, and was glaring toward the point where he had seen it when an erect black object appeared on the summit of a distant hill. It stood out sharply against the blue-green auroral zone which rimmed the horizon. His first thought was that it was the head and neck of a Dinopod. Immediately he pivoted his rifle toward it, threw himself prone, and clapped his eye to the rangefinder. Just as he found the object with this instrument it extended a pair of wings, flapped, and floated upward.

NO SOONER had he realized that his rifle was



trained on Ilrai than a murderous impulse leaped from the crypts of his subconscious like a flicker of dark lightning. If he had fired half a second sooner it would have been a mistake. Why couldn't he have fired sooner by that half a second? Even if he fired now, who could say that it hadn't been a mistake?

"You could..." came Rodney's clear voice like the voice of sanity, with a startling appropriateness which stilled his tightening finger on the trigger. "You could—move upstream—to the other place that—Mattawomba spoke of."

Pause.

"I'm all out of training," Rodney went on. "This flapping wears me down. I'm sitting on top of a sponge-tree getting my wind. I was about to say that the forest thins out north of here, and I'll stand a better chance of luring a Dinopod into the open. If you move upstream I'll try to bring one to you there."

"Check. I'm taking off in half a minute," mumbled the Counselor, still somewhat distraught, and began to dismount his rifle.

As he leaped and glided along the river-bank toward the appointed place, Rodney spoke again.

"I've spotted a fair-sized herd," she informed him. "They're headed for the river. In a minute they'll be out in the open and there are no trees from there on. There's a beaten trail to the river. Here's one coming out of the trees now, ahead of the rest! I've turned the light full in its face. This should be easy. It follows like a dog on a leash. Are you ready?"

"I'm not quite there yet, but I think I see the place," responded Sarrasen, leaping prodigiously. "I can see your beam distantly, to starboard."

He overshot the bluff rising from its cluster of sponge-trees, reversed his course, and in his haste to descend and mount his gun he came down less circumspectly than he might have done otherwise.

The Dinopod trail came down to the shore of a deep cove, partly enclosed on the upstream side by a curved rocky peninsula. Against this arm of land, a backwater eddy had accumulated a mass of



miscellaneous floating debris which had been invaded by vegetation from the shore; it was mated together into a solid raft with a resilient peaty surface, anchored by water-roots and creeping stems rooted on land. Even to an unhurried inspection, by illumination other than blue moonlight, it would have appeared deceptively solid.

Sarrasen descended on this surface and released the support of his harness when his feet were yet a few inches above it. The resulting impact of his full weight, plus that of his equipment, ruptured the fibrous raft and plunged him most disconcertingly into a slimy tangle of river flotsam.

For a moment he clung to the edge of the opening he had made, digging his fingers into the crumbling peat, and called into his radiophone: "Rodney! Sancabriel! I'm..."

**T**HEN THE weight of his rifle and tripod tore him loose from his insecure grip, and he found himself submerged in a repulsive web of slippery mud-coated roots, nondescript floating matter,

and inky black water. With grim rapidity he slipped off the shoulder-strap which supported his weapon, battled his way back to the surface against a nauseating, glutinous, clinging resistance. For a moment he was dismayed by his inability to find the hole through which he had plunged, and clawed among the roots on the underside of the floating mat. It was like thrusting his fingers into a nest of angleworms. He broke surface gasping, trod water, felt for the studs on his belt. The lift-power of the harness responded suddenly, raised his shoulders only half a foot from the water. The apparatus had not been designed to withstand total immersion, and his wings had become involved with driftwood.

"I'm stuck in a bog!" he broadcast to whomever might hear. "My harness has hardly any lift in it. Tell Mattawomba it's at the foot of the bluff. I think I can hang on for a few minutes."

But no one heard him and his earphones brought no reply, because his radiophone was not adapted to submarine service either—which he real-



ized as soon as he had spoken.

However, his first cry—abruptly cut short—had been heard. A rapid interchange by direct mental communication took place between Rodney, Ilrai, and the party on the causeway. Rodney being nearest was the first to arrive, having followed the Dinopod trail to the river. Her spotlight revealed Counselor Sarrasen's features, unrecognizably besmeared, in the midst of the bog. She detached the light and set it on the shore with the beam directed vertically, as a beacon.

"Don't walk on this stuff!" warned the Counselor. "It's a mere crust with deep water under it."

"My harness won't lift both of us," said Rodney as she maneuvered into a position above him. "But you can hang on to my feet until the others get here."

The full power of Rodney's harness lifted her companion from the water scarcely to his waist.

"I believe I can thrash my legs around and break a way through this mess to the shore, if you'll tow me along," de-

clared Sarrasen, but did not execute the plan.

THE BEDAZZLED Dinopod, which Rodney had abandoned, had reverted to its original intention of coming down to the river to grub in the shallows. It announced itself by uttering a deep bass groan and smashing the spotlight with a sweep of its horn. It then proceeded to pick up objects alongshore and fling them at the two Earthlings.

A hematite pebble slogged into the morass, further bespattering the Counselor's face with muck. A burr-like mass the size of a baseball sang past Rodney's ear. Her lurch to avoid it caused her to wheel downward about the pivot of her foot anchored in Sarrasen's grasp. She smacked solidly against the soggy, felted surface—thrust an arm into its gelatinous depths. Both began a series of lunges toward the open water while further missiles threw up muddy geysers about them. The fibrous mat started to break up under this double assault. Little islands of it drifted out into the stream. A forceful current gripped the



pair and swept them beyond the range of the Dinopod's bombardment.

"Our harness is so much dead weight," gasped Sarrasen. "Get rid of it!"

So while they rose and sank in the frothy swirl of the disintegrating bog, gagging on involuntary mouthfuls of mucid water filled with ambiguous particles and fibers, the two laboriously divested themselves of their detachable equipment. It was in a small way consoling to remember that eighteen months' research had disclosed no aquatic organisms which were pathogenic toward terrestrial beings.

"What do we do now?" queried Rodney, floating face upward.

"Strike out for shore."

"Of course. But which way is it?"

Their eyes, close to water-level, perceived only a rippling, bubble-studded blue expanse in all directions, under a stratum of mist. Overhead there was nothing but the glowing violet-blue sky, the blue coldness of the indifferent moon, a few great stars.

"I'm going to contact Il-

rai..." Rodney began, then uttered a choking gurgle and was silent. A giant eddy had engulfed her. Through the turbid medium Sarrasen saw her spinning like a top, a dim blue shape under the point of the vortex.

## XI

THE BAFFLED Dinopod stamped impatiently, glared with its four moonstone eyes into the blue river-mist which had covered the escape of the pair of strange animals. It surged into the water a few paces, raising billows worthy of a side-wheel steamer, uttered an angry *woomp!* when it trod on the sunken Humboldt rifle. Plunging its head and neck beneath the surface, it bubbled like a hippopotamus while it sought for and retrieved the weapon and its tripod. Then it sloshed ashore, trailing strings of water-weeds, to examine its find.

The simplicity of the tripod was uninteresting and the Dinopod cast it aside after bending and twisting it with its huge bands—strange hands, with a long central finger from



which two rows of other fingers sprouted on either side, in the same manner that the veins grow from the midrib of a leaf. But it was intrigued by the trimness and complexity of the rifle; and when the remainder of the herd appeared, the gun was passed from hand to hand to be felt and inspected.

Their inspection was cut short by the sound of steam-sirens which heralded the approach of a Kenian tank-patrol. The entire herd stampeded up the trail toward the protection of the forest, taking the rifle with them.

Scarcely three minutes had been occupied by the encounter of Sarrasen and Rodney with the Dinopod, and their subsequent escape. No greater lapse of time had occurred from then until the retreat of the Dinopod herd. The thunder of their departure was still faintly audible when Ilrai soared over the bluff and descended, having maintained his course even after the vertical beam of Rodney's light had been extinguished. He set off a series of photoflashes to guide the others who were converging on the

spot. Very shortly, the shore of the cove became a confusion of light and sound as Sancabriel and the party from the causeway flapped down from the sky, to be followed by the hissing miniature tanks of the Kenians which rumbled up along the river-bank. Mattawomba, being without harness, had remained behind.

"Rodney's light, smashed to bits!" groaned Himerling. "And look at this tripod, twisted into corkscrews! Dinopod tracks all over the place! They must have been ambushed from those trees."

"There is no sign of bloodshed," thought Ilrai. "It is my opinion that they were carried off alive."

"If Rodney's alive, why don't we hear from her?" thought back Himerling. "And where is Sarrasen's rifle?"

"Rodney may not be conscious," insisted Ilrai. "I feel that she is alive. The rifle may be nearby, where it fell in the water."

**A** THUDDING crack sounded remotely. The manipulations of the Dinopods had accidentally fired the gun.



"That was a shot!" exclaimed Sancabriel. "There's your answer! Sarrasen is alive anyway, and that was his way of letting us know!"

In the short silence which followed, the slapping of ripples along the muddy shore seemed unnaturally loud.

"Ilrai, you've been training Mattawomba and probably can get through to him better than any of us," Sancabriel rapped out. "Have him instruct his engineer to run back along the causeway at top speed and whistle up all the patrols within hearing. We'll throw a cordon around the whole forest. Have the Wall-Makers call in all the patrols they can spare and that can get here within an hour, and get out all the reserves in the three nearest sectors of Chicagua. Tell Mattawomba to stand by in Chicagua as our liaison man with the Wall-Makers. I'll contact the *Hermes*. She'll have to go to the other end of the lake to take off—she'd make a shambles of the terminal yards with her negative field if she took off from where she is now. I can get someone else to handle

Mattawomba's juggernaut.

"Himberling, you try to make contact with the launch on Island Number Seven, and tell 'em to come in at once and report at the end of the causeway. They're not much farther away from here than the *Hermes*. We'll give these Dinopods a memorable night—something they can tell their great-grandchildren about."

Mattawomba, reclining in his gondola, was suddenly galvanized. He scribbled furiously on his writing tablet, showed it to his Kenian train-crew, who scurried to their posts. The train rolled backward, gathered speed, fled down the causeway in reverse, its whistle screaming a coded alarm. Across the dreaming blue of the Outlands, there rose an answering medley of remote hootings as the roving tank-patrols, alert for vandal Dinopods, acknowledged Sancabriel's order. Elevated gateways clanged open in the living walls, let down their bascules to the sound of chain and ratchet, disgorged reinforcements. Far away, a third of the way around Chicagua and across the strait on



Island Number Seven, there was a running and a shouting in the encampments about the *Hermes* and the launch.

## XII

**R**ODNEY'S head lay on Sarrasen's chest as he swam backward, clutching her with one arm. Her body trailed flaccidly in the water; her eyes were closed; her face was still and blue-white under the moon. Was he swimming parallel to the current, across it, or in spirals? He could see nothing but blue water, blue mist, the alien sky. The moon was almost at the zenith; no chance of getting his bearings there. These unfamiliar Kenian constellations! Just how was he looking at them?

Something loomed darkly through the mist. The shore? No, a little island. He drove himself grimly toward it. There were no shallows near it; it rose abruptly from the water. He crawled upon it, dragged Rodney after him, commenced the measured routine of artificial respiration.

The island was soft and

springy underfoot, overgrown with bulbous-leaved creepers which trailed in the river. He glanced up from his rhythmic concentration and was surprised to see three more islands some distance to port. Three islands? They must be the same three he had used as a landmark. Had he drifted so far? He resumed his ministrations to Rodney, glanced again, and blinked. The three islands had shifted upstream!

Comprehension dawned. It was his island that was moving—a buoyant mass torn loose by the diurnal flood from upstream marshlands. There was Iron Mountain forward, rising above the river mist. That would be south, and this would be the nearest approach of the river to the causeway before it swerved westward around the mountain. His sense of direction returned; the constellation became recognizable.

"By now, all hands will have turned out to find us," he reflected. "There'll be no one at the rail-head except the Wall-Makers with the trains, and perhaps Mattawomba."

With all the power of his



lungs he shouted repeatedly, "Mattawombal!" and the mountain threw back his cry, a plaintive bleat.

WHILE HE continued to labor over Rodney, fighting the inertia of protesting muscles, his navigator's instinct automatically observed the changing relation of stars and mountains as the river swept westward and back again. Perhaps two hours elapsed, while he stuck doggedly to his task, remembering the age-old maxim which governs such emergencies: "*Don't give up!*"

The river-water evaporated from his clothes in wisps of vapor, and he drenched them again with perspiration which was not altogether the perspiration of ultimate fatigue. The salty fluid stung his eyes, streaked his face with the bog-mud still matted in his hair.

Rodney's eyelids quivered; she sneezed and opened her eyes. Sarrasen collapsed on the mossy turf. One of the creepers had wound a tendril about his ankle but he did not notice it. From the waist down he seemed to have petrified; from the

waist up every muscle was a creaking agony.

"Come out of it, Rodney," he wheezed. "I think you'll have to work on me now."

The floating island passed into the blue obscurity of a deep gorge where the river seethed noisily between echoing, water-sculptured walls. The high crags along the brink of the chasm reflected a sapphire glow of moonlight into the depths. Foaming cross-currents buffeted the raft of vegetation, sent it rocking and revolving against stony snags which tore off fragments and launched them upon swirling independent careers. A sudden bend in the stream flung the crumbling mass within arm's-length of the canyon wall, stranded it on a pebbly shoal.

Sarrasen and Rodney stood with their backs against a vertical wall of slippery rock while the shallow torrent tugged at their ankles. They watched their raft vanish piecemeal into the dark threat of the canyon, down a staircase of tumbling cataracts.

"One hundred feet if it's an inch!" shouted Sarrasen above



the tumult of the waters, gesturing upward. "If we were snails, we'd have a chance of crawling to the top. I believe that we've come clear around Iron Mountain. We should be somewhere south of the railroad."

"I'm still groggy," responded Rodney. "Where are we? What happened to Ilrai?"

THE SKY northward from the causeway was blood-red with flame and turbulent with boiling red-lit smoke. The *Hermes* swooped low above the holocaust and the trails of rocket-bullets radiated from her in a fabric of intersecting crimson lines. Sancabriel was making good his promise that this night would be memorable in the folklore of Dinopods.

Himberling and three others of the *Hermes'* party—including two of Rodney's feminine colleagues—stood upon a smoldering hill leaning wearily on their rocket-rifles, wings dropping cape-fashion. They looked down upon the smoking vestiges of what had been a grove of sponge-trees.

"In a world which rains every

day like this one does, one wouldn't expect to find things so easily inflammable," Himberling remarked gloomily. "Who would have thought that a burning Dinopod would start a forest fire! Where's Ilrai?"

"Ilrai returned to the causeway," replied one of the girls. "He has a curious idea that Rodney is alive—possibly Counselor Sarrasen also—and that we're looking for them in the wrong place. He can't explain why he has such a suspicion."

The silhouettes of a squadron of Kenian tanks appeared against the flaming sky on a neighboring ridge, then dropped from view. A flapping black shape rose against the glare, swooped down upon the hilltop. It was Sancabriel, a tigering gleam in his eye and Sarrasen's Humboldt rifle in his hand.

"Look at this!" he snarled. "We know how fast these Dinopods can travel, and how they could have taken Sarrasen and Rodney. We found the herd that did the deed. They had this rifle with them! Nothing else! Do you know what the beasts have done?"



He shook his fists aloft, clutching the rifle. "They've eaten them!"

AT A LATER date Ilrai wrote in his journal as follows:

*Human nature being as it is, it was perhaps inevitable that a third of the Dinopod population of Island Number Seven should be massacred in one night. In all fairness I must say that Martian nature, under an equal provocation, very likely would have reacted in the same way. Nevertheless it was a tragedy. It is true that the Dinopods are Kenian carnivores—or rather, omnivores—but a study of their habits has revealed, not only that the flesh of terrestrial creatures is repugnant to them but that when they are induced to consume it by artifice they become violently ill and may even die from its effects. Such incidents remind us that we are essentially but half civilized.*

ILRAI PACED nervously back and forth along the edge of the circular platform at the end of the causeway. He

was oppressed by a feeling that the glowering red flare in the northern sky was the symbol of a ghastly error. Some deep resonance of mind with mind, even with an unconscious mind, told him that Rodney was alive—and not up there under the smoke of the burning forest. He could no longer contact the minds of the Dinopod slayers; they were altogether absorbed in a fury of revenge. Ilrai's mental sendings were no more heeded than the chirpings of a canary in a riot. The emanations from the onslaught were red, Ilrai brooded, like the red in the sky.

The Martian became rigid. A voice sounded in his brain, the voice of Rodney's thought!

"Ilrai!" came the call. "Ilrai! Am I coming through?"

"Yes," responded Ilrai. "In the names of Phobos and Deimos, where are you?"

"I'm with Counselor Sarra-sen."

"I knew it!" The friends of the imperturbable Martian would have been amazed to see him execute several steps of that time-honored terrestrial foot-rhythm known as the horn-



pipe. "But what is your location?"

"The Counselor says we're south of the causeway. We're in a canyon and we can't get out. It should be easily seen from the air. Is anyone with you? I've tried to contact Himberling and some others without success. Their thoughts are terrible. I can't make them out. It's like trying to talk to a hurricane."

"I am alone on the causeway and I can contact no one. But wait! I have forgotten Mattawomba! He remained in Chicagua. I must devise a plan of action."

Along the rim of the platform were various little shelters where the Wall-Makers stored tools and supplies. After further mental interchange, Ilrai extracted from one of these shelters a coil of rope spun from Kenian silk. The gondola containing his photographic equipment stood on a siding; from this he removed the photoflash apparatus. A touch on his belt-studs reduced his apparent weight to eight ounces, and a soaring leap sped him southward.

## XIII

"**E**VERY joint in my skeleton is like a rusty hinge, and growing worse," grimaced Sarrasen, unsuccessfully trying to sit on a ledge three inches wide, while he supported Rodney with one arm. She was not yet quite steady on her feet. "What does Ilrai report?"

"He sees the canyon, Counselor," replied Rodney. "Your estimated bearings are fair enough—we're about two miles south of the rail-head."

"Counselor!" repeated Sarrasen with a frown of annoyance. "I have an individual name of my own, in case you're not aware of it yet."

"Of course your feet are wet. So are mine. We're standing in water."

"I was trying to remind you that my name is Jeffrey," said Sarrasen, raising his voice.

"I can't hear you. The river makes so much noise."

"I'm suggesting that you call me Jeffrey, blast it!" shouted Sarrasen, and filled the gorge with new reverberations.

"I couldn't do that—it



wouldn't be good for the morale of the organization," Rodney admonished gravely. "There's Ilrai's first flash! He's over the canyon."

"Tell him that he's about one thousand feet to starboard," Sarrasen moodily directed.

Two more flashes, followed by telepathic responses from Rodney, brought Ilrai to a point directly above the stranded pair. He secured one end of his rope around a pinnacle of stone, swung on the rope with his full weight, then allowed the coil to unroll downwards. The overhang of the cliff made the free end splash into the middle of the torrent, which promptly swept it downstream. Ilrai reduced weight, let the rope run through one hand while he floated down, sighted the pair at the base of the cliff, flapped toward them with the end of the rope, handed it to Sarrasen.

"I shall now go aloft," Ilrai thought to Rodney. "There I shall remove my harness—since it lacks sufficient marginal lift to support both of us—fasten one of its loops around the rope, and let it slide

down. It will fit you very loosely but it will serve to carry you up. Then we shall repeat the operation and bring up the Counselor. I have contacted Mattawomba, who is on his way now, by rail, with additional harness. He is a novice at harness flying, but he should be able to bring the paraphernalia from the causeway over this short distance. My flashes will guide him."

RODNEY'S removal from the canyon was effected without mishap. She threw one leg outside the oversize belt and ascended as in a breeches buoy. But when Rodney sent the harness down the rope to Sarrasen, Ilrai's rescue plan suffered a miscarriage.

The descent of the harness made its wings balloon with air and billow outward. One wing caught on a projection of the cliff. Since the line ran loosely through the harness, and since Sarrasen's movements were limited by the small extent of the shallow in which he was standing, no amount of tugging and shaking would dislodge it.

"I'll bend the line around



me!" bellowed the Counselor. "You'll have to haul me up!"

When he had completed his preparations and shouted his readiness, Sarrasen waited expectantly but the line continued to hang slack.

Two pebbles cracked against the opposite cliff in quick succession and rebounded into the river. One plopped into the shallow at the Counselor's feet.

"Watch the loose rock up there!" he shouted.

Came a tremendous heave on the line which left him spinning in mid-air, a yard above the stream. Equally tremendous heaves jerked him upward ten feet at a time.

Sarrasen marvelled at Ilrai's strength.

WHEN HE approached the point where the line slid over the bulge of the cliff he thrust out his feet and came up running, with Ilrai's harness over his arm. He was confronted—not by Ilrai—but by a Dinopod, hauling in the rope as if it were a fish-line. Ilrai's flashes had served as beacons to eyes other than those for which they were intended.

The Dinopod was not alone. A battalion of its fellows stood in irregular ranks upon the rocky terraces behind it. They were abnormally quiet, as if they waited in an expectant hush. Occasionally they stamped, snorted softly, shook their armored heads. Blue gleams shifted up and down their colossal horns, slithered over the knobs and corrugations of their jointed back-plates.

Rodney was seated on the ground at the feet of her captor, tenderly feeling her head. There were dark stains on her fingers.

"They sneaked up on us and threw stones," she informed Sarrasen bitterly. "Can't they do anything but go around throwing at people? I saw them in time to duck. It was only a glancing blow. And I volunteered as a decoy! Ilrai's out cold. Maybe he's dead. I don't know."

Jeffrey's eyes followed her pointing finger, beheld Ilrai sprawling limply. A hot surge of anger rose within him; then he was dumbfounded by the picture which flashed across his memory. He saw a man—



could it be Counselor Sarrasen?—sighting along a gun-barrel at a hated image in the range-finder, his finger taut upon the trigger.

"There's nothing we can do now," continued Rodney. "It's their move."

THE THREE were surrounded by a company of Dinopods who held a consultation over them in subdued, hollow, guttural noises. Ilrai's harness was snatched from Sarrasen's hand, Rodney was raised roughly to her feet. The conferees bent down their heads and sniffed cautiously at their captives through olfactory tubes at the bases of their horns, then stamped and tossed their heads in evident distaste.

"The big oafs!" muttered Rodney. "They're no rosebuds! I wish I could tell them. They smell like vinegar and turpentine."

The upshot of the conference was that Rodney and Sarrasen were firmly bound with many coils of the line which Ilrai had provided, after it had been severed into two portions by one snap of a Dinopod's jaws.

They were curious, intricate jaws with a multiplicity of serrated mandibles and quivering palps like the mouth of an insect. The inert Martian was left unbound.

"These knots! Did you ever see anything like them?" exclaimed Sarrasen, making a mental note even in the midst of his distress concerning Ilrai.

Three Dinopods took charge of the captives, carrying them gingerly at arm's length as if they were an unpleasant sort of vermin. Why they should have taken Ilrai remains something of a mystery, although it has been established that the Dinopod mind entertains a superstitious regard for the unburied dead of their own kind or of other worldly races.

The entire company set off across the Outlands at a rapid trot in the direction of the causeway, then broke into an undulating gallop. The plain boomed and rang under their battering wooden hoofs until it seemed that the very sky must be shaking and thundering. Jeffrey, swinging through dizzy arcs in the fist of the galloping Dinopod, caught glimpses of a



flame-reddened sky, saw the flashes of the *Hermes'* guns below the horizon, heard their detonations like great doors slamming in the heavens above the rumbling thunder of the Dinopodian charge.

**T**HE CHARGE slackened as it drew near to Iron Mountain, halted at the rail-head where the causeway sloped down to the germinating wall.

"What goes on here?" Rodney called weakly to Sarrasen. "A buried treasure hunt?"

A gang of Dinopods were laboring frenziedly at an excavating project. Some were plowing up the gravelly soil with their horns; others were scooping up the loose material—with what appeared to be Dinopod back-plates—and heaping it upon the immature barrier. The defensive polyps were entirely buried along a fifty-foot section, and up the incline which gave access to the rail-head platform. The workers, who had deposited the final shovelfuls at the head of this ramp, threw down their scoops and mounted the platform, sent the whooping echoes flying among

the precipices of Iron Mountain with their triumphant abysmal bellowings.

"It's an invasion!" cried Rodney. "And not a patrol in sight!"

"The patrols seldom come out this far," Sarrasen responded as their Dinopods grunted up the newly created ramp. "No regular trains to protect. From the looks of the sky up north, all available forces are there."

A brusque shaking admonished them to refrain from further conversation.

Advancing along the causeway three abreast, the Dinopod column was headed by the trio bearing Rodney, Jeffrey and Ilrai. The Martian remained lax and unresisting, like a grotesque rag doll in his captor's grasp. It is impossible to say what motive lay behind the Dinopods' foray. The railway ramps inside the circumferential wall offered easy access to Chicagua, but the existence of these ramps must have been unknown to the invaders—or at best a shrewd surmise. Whatever havoc they may have planned to wreak upon the



Wall-Makers, they must have known that they risked certain ultimate destruction at the hands of the Earthlings. Perhaps they had no thought save of desperate, suicidal retaliation for what was to them unprovoked wholesale slaughter. Some genius among Dinopods may have schemed their attack under the stress of revengeful passion.

THE FOUR parallel tracks stretched to the horizon ahead of the advancing column. Southward the Outlands were blue with moonshine; northward they were sullen red under the fiery sky. The Dinopods were blue on one side, red on the other.

Jeffrey noted dully that a brilliant star had risen above the horizon, continued to hang there as if resting on the rim of the world. A dim sense of astronomical irregularity stirred within him; he scanned the heavens. This star did not fit into his knowledge of the constellations as seen from Kenia. How odd that it should have appeared at the very vortex of the converging tracks. He re-

garded it with heightening interest, became alert. It was below the horizon now! Little quivers of light ran down the rails before it. It was not a star!

#### XIV

THE KENIAN locomotive-builders had been quick to perceive the superiority of the electric arc over their previous oil-burning headlights. It was one of these later models which was now bearing down upon the Dinopods. It was in fact Mattawomba's personal car, used for inspection tours, with a specially constructed tender which permitted him to squat behind the cab and manipulate the controls. He flashed his intentions to Rodney. The hypnotic attraction of the dazzling light, he hoped, would induce the Dinopods to forget their captives and provide opportunity of rescue.

"Suppose they throw us down and walk on us!" shuddered Rodney.

But the Dinopod reactions were not precisely as Matta-



womba expected. The cannier advance guard bowed or averted their ranks, goggling in fascination and elbowing each other. Sarrasen's custodian galloped in advance of the others and held its prisoner suspended above the fringe of glittering blades which bordered the causeway, indicating by pantomime that if the locomotive continued to advance, the Earthling would be allowed to fall among the razor-edges.

Mattawomba was thrown into confusion by this unforeseen stratagem and hastily applied his brakes. But the Dinopods' naive mechanical ideas included no concept of momentum; if the locomotive were going to stop, they reasoned, it would stop dead, immediately. Moreover, the threatened sacrifice of Jeffrey was pure bluff; they had no intention of losing their hostages if it could be avoided. Therefore, when the locomotive continued to pound down upon them, all three of the leading Dinopods cantered toward it, tossed their captives upon the track before it, and retreated a short distance. Their sole desire was to halt

the onrushing menace and overturn it.

Sarrasen's shin cracked against one of the rails and an explosion of pain flared through him to his finger-tips. Rodney fell on top of him.

But Ilrai landed on his feet. Ilrai, who had feigned death in the clutch of the Dinopod while his winged thoughts sped across the miles to Mattawomba's brain, revising his plan of rescue to meet the changed situation.

WITH ONE four-handed sweep he gathered up the two Earthlings, and stepped aside as Mattawomba's locomotive rolled past and creaked to a halt with a singing sizzle of steam.

The Dinopods stood immobilized by this miracle of the re-animated corpse.

"Two gondolas behind," Mattawomba directed briefly. "Put them on and cut the ropes."

And it was done.

Not until the rescue train had attained half-speed in reverse did the Dinopods awake to action; then they charged



after it, while the causeway trembled. For a few moments it seemed they would overtake it but their pace was no match for the mounting speed of piston-driven wheels and soon they were invisibly distant.

"My leg!" Jeffrey groaned from the floor of the gondola.

"Your leg! How about my head?" retorted Rodney.

"A sledge-hammer wouldn't make a dent in it," responded Jeffrey through his teeth.

Mattawomba looked over his shoulder.

"We're not through yet," he shouted above the iron roar and clicking tattoo of wheel on rail. "We still have to stop the Dinopods."

He jerked a thumb backwards.

Jeffrey raised himself painfully on one elbow and looked over the rear of the gondola.

Mattawomba's train was hammering along Track One. The headlights of three more locomotives were approaching via the remaining tracks. Mattawomba reduced speed; halted with a jerk; started forward with groaning drivers; was overtaken and passed by the

hissing onrush of the three other trains, caught up with them again. Now the four locomotives raced together in perfect alignment; four pairs of compound cylinders beating in unison harmonized in locomotive orchestration. Kenian engineers leaned from the cab-windows of the other three. Each tender was followed by a flat carrying a heap of oil-soaked rubbish and a string of tank-cars.

"Twenty tanks in each train," called Mattawomba, "and all the domes are open!"

**A**T A BLAST from Mattawomba's whistle the other locomotives fell back, arranged themselves *en echelon* with Mattawomba in the lead. The second gondola of his train was adjacent to the flat-car on the next track; each flat-car was opposite the engine-cab of the next train.

The long-legged Ilrai now strode from train to train across the diagonal path of flat-cars, ignited the heap of rubbish on the outermost one, stepped back to the third, lifted the Kenian engineer—who coiled worm-like about his arm



—from the cab of the fourth locomotive, reached through the cab-window and opened the throttle wide. The fourth train shot ahead, running wild and trailing a banner of flame.

He had repeated this operation on the other two trains and transferred the three Kenian engineers to the forward gondola when the air was shaken by the thudding jar of an explosion to the rear. All eyes looked back to behold a tank car belching pompons of flame, ignited by flying sparks falling into the open dome, and rapidly overtaking them.

"We'll be cooked alive if it passes us," called Mattawomba. "This is the one thing I was afraid of. We can outrun it. This is a light haul."

"Outrun it!" shouted Rodney. "We don't have much of a margin! I think I can see the Dinopods ahead of us!"

"We'll have to chance it," was the reply as the gondolas lurched forward with a crash of couplings. Another tank of oil let go with a boom, showed blazing puddles across the causeway.

**I**NTERMINABLE moments passed while they raced the uncontrolled train in a damp reek of hot iron and oil-laden steam. They drew ahead of it, while the rear of their transit was punctuated by the detonations of exploding oil.

"Ilrai, listen to me. I have something to say," began Jeffrey, breaking a long silence. The Martian, crouching over him, half rose with a movement which expressed surprise, then inclined his eye-encircled head as if to indicate, "I am listening." It seemed that he had said aloud, "I am listening."

"Tonight, when I set out with Rodney, I almost shot you for a Dinopod," Jeffrey continued. "In fact, I almost shot you anyway, even after I recognized you."

The Martian rose to his full height, swayed with the swaying gondola, looked down at Jeffrey with eyes that glowed like phosphorus. It was impossible—Ilrai could not speak—but Jeffrey thought that he had said, "You have changed, Counselor Sarrasen."

"I didn't say anything," re-



plied Rodney to Jeffrey's question.

"We're stopping here! We're half a mile ahead!" barked Mattawomba. "Jump as soon as you dare and run across the tracks!"

"Jeffrey can't jump!" shrieked Rodney—unheard by that individual because he had fainted when Ilrai hastily lifted him from the floor of the gondola.

Earthlings and Martian lay flat on the farther side of the causeway as the blazing oil-train swept past them, leaking streams of fire; then ran breathlessly in the opposite direction. Ilrai still carried Sar-rasen. Behind them as they ran, glancing backward, three successive shocks rocked the causeway as the wheeled projectiles plowed into the Dinopod column, piled up with screeching metallic din in buckling junkheaps of steel which toppled from the wall in volcanic ruin. Crimson mushrooms of flame vomited skyward, tossing up ragged shreds of metal and meteor-tailed fragments of the would-be invaders. Fiery cataracts poured

from both sides of the causeway.

The rearward portion of the column fled in trampling panic, jostling each other from the wall to lie helpless on the Outlands plain.

And when the flames on the causeway had died down among the twisted wreckage, and only a dark smear of faintly-red-denied smoke obscured the stars in the northern sky, the gaunt un-Earthly forms of the Outlands scavengers came stalking under the blue moon to the aftermath of carnage.

## XV

A PROTESTING feminine voice echoed along the hall of the *Hermes'* sick-bay.

"But I'm not suffering from shock!" expostulated Rodney. "All I have is a bump on the head. And it was a dirty trick, taking off half of my hair!"

"You'll stay in bed until I tell you differently," admonished Humberling. "We'll grow the hair back fast enough when that scalp-wound is healed."

"How about Jeffrey?" de-



manded Rodney, abandoning protest as futile.

"Nothing serious there. A simple fracture of the left tibia, various lacerations and bruises, general muscular stiffness. But I'm afraid he's a little delirious. He insisted that we bring him a bit of cord, and now he's tying and untying knots and muttering, 'If a Dinopod can do it, so can I.'"

"That isn't delirium; it's merely persistence. You'll hear about it in due time. Any other casualties. Where's Ilrai?"

"Ilrai is in his cabin, filling another volume of his journal. He came through unscathed. No, he wasn't hit in the head. You can't sneak up on a Martian with panoramic vision. He flopped almost as soon as the stone left the Dinopod's hand. Jeffrey's sudden metamorphosis into a budding telepath has excited Ilrai tremendously; he'd work with Jeffrey twelve hours a day if we'd let him. He's still theorizing about it; thinks that Jeffrey failed the first time because he was afraid of failure, but doesn't quite understand the emotional mechanism of the change as yet. But he will—

and then watch out for a fifty-thousand-word thesis.

"There are some other casualties. Your pal Wanda was burned on the arm by a falling sponge tree. Archer was gored in the shoulder by a Dinopod. Campione was seared across his shoulders by a rocket-bullet. Three cases of partial suffocation by smoke. That's all. We haven't had so many people in the sick-bay since we landed."

AS SOON as Humberling permitted, his patients were requested by Captain Jutland, aboard the *Caduceus*, to make personal reports by radio. The signals were relayed through a remote-controlled robot transport poised outside the ionosphere of Kenia. The proceedings were in fact a conference. The participants on Kenia could see and hear Captain Jutland via installations at their bed-sides or in their cabins, and could hear each other. Captain Jutland could see and hear all of them at once in his conference room on the *Caduceus*—a round chamber completely encircled by a frieze of



contiguous telescreens. Ilrai, a master telepath whose range exceeded that of all but a handful of exceptional Earthlings—none of whom were connected with the Sanitary Service—utilized direct thought-transference.

After hearing varied descriptions of the Dinopod hunt which turned into a miniature war, Captain Jutland remarked:

"In other words, Jeffrey went out to bring in a Dinopod, whereas they brought him in. How does it feel to be a victim of the chase, Counselor?"

"It feels like a broken leg," responded Jeffrey. "I'll watch out for bogs next time."

"Next time you'll go over to Seven," observed Sancabriel. "According to latest reports, all the surviving Dinopods lit out and swam the strait."

"You may feel that Kenia is a difficult assignment," Captain Jutland went on. "It isn't. You haven't seen a really difficult world yet—with, say, two or more mechanized races, all hostile to you and to each other, and an assortment of

nasty parasites and infections which thrive on human meat."

"I'm not sure that I want to see any other worlds," declared Jeffrey.

"What's that?"

"When we've finished, some of us will stay behind to make preparations for the first immigrants. That's the usual procedure, I understand, if the world is finally certified."

"**T**HAT WILL be some time in the future, my boy. Among other things, we'll have to be sure that Mattawomba is absolutely, one hundred per cent cured and that his infection isn't latent in some form of Kenian life."

"I have decided to remain on Kenia also," interjected Mattawomba. "I can't bring myself to abandon my railroad. It's the biggest model I ever had."

"Model-builder rejects Eden in favor of locomotives," commented Captain Jutland. Then, to Jeffrey, "Now tell me why you want to stay with the Permanent Base party."

"This world grows on one. You'd have to be here to un-



derstand. You'd have to see the days of rain and thunder, when things grow while you watch them and the sun breaks through like a cloudburst of light. You'd have to see the blue nights. It's like having two worlds in one. Even the Dinopods... there's an aura of power about them. However, there's a condition."

He hesitated.

"I'll stay if Rodney stays with me."

"What does Rodney say?" inquired Captain Jutland.

"I haven't said," announced Rodney succinctly.

IN HIS bed aboard the *Hermes*, Jeffrey was aware of a faint infiltration of Ilrai's thought into his brain. He was still the veriest novice as a telepath, and the Martian's thoughts came through with a quality of incompleteness and indefiniteness, as if words were left out. As nearly as it can be represented in print, the general effect was something like this:

*"Ordinarily...do not...private reflections...others...but if...promise not divulge...*

*source...information...and if...be allowed...borrow...peculiar expression...Matta-womba...deliver...dead languages...would say...Rodney...female Earthling...characteristic...giving you the works."*

Although this communication was not directed at Rodney, it activated a dim tremor of resonance in a hypersensitized area of her emotions. She sensed that something was transpiring in the Martian's mind—although they were in different compartments of the *Hermes*—which concerned matters very much present in her current reveries.

An arrow of thought, barbed with suspicion, twanged into the Martian's brain: "Ilrai, keep your nose out of this!"

And his response came back, bland as fine oil: "I cannot do otherwise. I have none."

These exchanges, swift as beams of light, were imperceptible to Captain Jutland.

"Let us reserve our decisions until the time for them arrives," he advised. "But before signing off, I must say that, as an improbable sequence



of improbable events, what you have just told me isn't likely to happen once in..."

He groped for a phrase, failed to find it, concluded with

an air of compromise: "Well, not once in a Martian lifetime."

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## The Plot, The Plot!

(Continued From Page 23)

nature as to keep the plot in motion toward a logical (and very often foregone) conclusion.

Such stories were written in the main for people with undeveloped literary taste, or with small literary discrimination, or for people with considerable literary taste who, nonetheless, liked to read a simple, uncomplicated, fast-moving story for relaxation. "Simple and uncomplicated" in the sense that perusing the story did not require thought beyond the crossword-puzzle level (you could have a very complicated plot in the jigsaw puzzle sense). But the story must not require much mental effort from the reader. And, often, the plots had to be "simple and uncomplicated" in the sense that there would be nothing "difficult" at all for the adolescent or uneducated reader.

WHILE a large percentage of pulp fiction, therefore, was on the most juvenile level, some of it was literate enough to interest the intelligent reader with developed literary tastes. (Much was made of the fact, for example, that President Wilson liked to read detective mysteries for relaxation.) But the over-all picture was this: issues had to be simple black or white; characters had to be either Good or Bad—and while the "coward becomes hero" plot was a common one, the character in question was a thorough Coward (though basically good) until the metamorphosis into an all-out Hero. If he was afraid, he was a coward; once he changed, and became a Hero, he was of course utterly Fearless—and his strength was as the strength of ten, because his heart was Pure. The "Victorian" phraseology gradually



vanished, but the simple-minded attitudes remained.

At any time during the pulp era, there were high-grade and low-grade specimens. In the low-grade pulps, writing was crude and the formula apparent on every page; in the high-grade pulps, writing was more skillful and the formula often rather well concealed. You'd find some measure of complication in character, at times. A Bad Man might do a Good Thing, once in a while—he might even Examine His Conscience and momentarily acknowledge he was Wrong, before the grand finale. The Hero might be afraid at times—although he always managed to go ahead despite everything.

But nevertheless, the "main story" had to be kept in motion at all times, and nothing must interfere with it.

The pulp writer's plot was the outline of a story—into which characters, situations, etc., were fitted. Toward the end of the pulp era (the days of the 7" by 10" magazines) editors and writers had begun to talk about "plot rising out of character". This was an advance over the low-grade pulp formula—but just the same,

you had the same plot-orientation. In the last analysis it meant that you started out with a character and chose your plot elements to fit him or her (rather than tossing names into the blank spaces of a chart already made). But the patterns remained simple ones, easily reduced to a page or so—and if the reader grasped that much, then he had all he really needed to know about the story. As time went on, the more skillful writers introduced various subtleties in character development, etc., but these could go by the reader without his getting lost.

**T**HIS IS just about the opposite of the requirements for writing the sort of fiction which endures, so far as examination of the bulk of familiar literary masterpieces is concerned—and particularly those of the last century or so. For example, at this writing, I'm about three-quarters of the way through "The Idiot" by Fyodor Dostoyevsky. So far as the "main story" goes, I'm by no means sure what the "plot" of this novel is—in the pulp sense—and I might not be sure at the end. *Nor does it matter whether I am!* In the



introduction, David Magarshack tells of the numerous synopses and drafts that the author worked out before he settled on the novel as it now stands. The "plan" and "scheme" was constant; the "main story" vacillated widely, and the author's reason for choosing the "main story" he did was because he finally decided that this one best revealed his characters.

Now what, you may ask, is the essential difference between this and the "plot arising from character" that pulp writers tried to develop in the last decade or so of the pulp era?

It's first of all, a difference in breadth. The pulp story always had to have a clear pattern (however complex and concealed its involutions to the reader at any given point)—a track along which the story moved, and the characters were conveyed—leading up to a conclusion where the main problems were resolved and the solutions to mysteries worked out logically. Evolving this plot from a character or a group of characters, the pulp author could get a certain amount of interplay and cross revelation, but there was little

opportunity for depth. The plot just couldn't be held up that long. Something had to happen; then something else had to happen, etc., and the suspense was plot-suspense.

**T**HE LARGEST depth usually possible was for the lead character to have two problems, plotwise—a problem connected with his job or position (in science fiction, the scientific gimmick or situation) and a personal problem which had to be solved *in order that* the plot-problem could be worked out.

In "The Idiot" we have an intricate study of the effect that the simple character of Prince Myshkin has on a large group of people and on himself in relation to these people. There is great breadth and depth here—and length. Few "main story" novels need to be much longer than 60,000 words, and many of them are so thin they have to be padded desperately to attain even that length. The public which wants fast-moving, simple stories doesn't want things dragged out. More important, writers who have been trained in the pulp school seldom learned to write in breadth and depth, and often could at-



tain length only by tedious padding which did not add either breadth or depth to the story.

Yet, the fact remains that works of literature like "The Idiot" sell well in paperback editions.

One of the typical things about some science fiction novels that have appeared in the pulps has been breadth in background detail. Jules Verne's characters are mostly stock "types", but his background detail is full of warmth and charm; C. S. Lewis' "Out of the Silent Planet" has breadth and depth of human insight—and not much plot. Otfried Von Hanstein's "The Hidden Colony" has an enormous wealth of background material, and minute exploration of one character—the plot can be reduced to a single paragraph.

**N**OW IN EACH of the earlier outlines, of "The Idiot," the plot was of the very same texture as in the published version, and the author is in no hurry to "advance" it or "keep it moving along".

"The Idiot" is not difficult to read, but it does require mental effort on the part of

the reader—the characters cannot be ticketed off easily, nor is the author's scheme easily predictable. A good story has to have suspense, and the suspense here lies not in the action chart, but in the unfolding and interplay of the characters. As in nearly all lasting fiction it is not such so much *what* happens as *why*, *how* and the external and internal effects of what happens upon the people in the story, and, again the interplay.

For thirty pages, for example, a minor character reads aloud a long, rambling "testament" he has written—thirty pages wherein the plot is not advanced one iota, by the requirements of pulp fiction. However, I venture to prophesy that "The Idiot" will endure far longer than "Gray Lensman"—which has a very definite, although complicated plot, moves along quickly, is exciting on its own terms—and hasn't a single human character worth remembering. Kimbal Kinnison is a grown-up boy scout who has learned the necessity of fighting dirty against a particular enemy—which alone makes him memorable by comparison with the bulk of pulp heroes of the



Thirties. His personality, however, is nil, so far as it is revealed to the reader. There is no evidence that he has ever read a book (except for technical tomes, and low-grade hackwork—which he dislikes) heard any music (outside of popular ditties) or experienced any emotions which could not be expressed completely in the language of cartoon-strip balloons. He is unchanged three novels later, except for age; and since a Lensmen obviously cannot have any emotional conflicts he is that mythical character the “normal human being”. Which places him outside our interest, our credibility, and our understanding.

All the above is not to demean the Lensman stories, or their author—who is unsurpassed in this level of writing—but merely to underline the difference between pulp fiction and literature.

SO, I WANT to make a few suggestions. I say “suggestions” rather than “conclusions” because literature is an art, not a science. There just aren’t any “laws” through which you could make infallible predictions and conclusions. (In science, if you know

*all the relevant laws* and have examined *all the relevant data* correctly, then you can predict correctly every time. Scientists’ predictions sometimes don’t come off because (a) they didn’t know all the relevant laws, or (b) they didn’t have all the relevant data, or (c) they made a mistake somewhere.)

Suggestion 1: Since most published science fiction is written to the requirements of “main story” publishers and readers, and most science fiction authors came up through the “main story” school of writing, the odds against any science fiction novel being lasting literature are very high. Such an event is not impossible, but the thinking traits of both the “scientist” and the “pulp writer”—to use these terms very loosely—are so loaded toward “formula” that even a high degree of writing skill is usually insufficient. Note: Some of the writing of Robert A. Heinlein which most closely approaches literature is to be found in novels with the most-lamented “plot defects”.

Suggestion 2: A work of literature which is also science fiction most probably will not be conceived by the



author as "science fiction" primarily, is not likely to be produced by an author whose name is well-known in the field, nor is it likely to be recognized as science fiction by most enthusiasts.

Suggestion 3: Such a work probably will not be liked by most science fiction enthusiasts.

Suggestion 4: Such a work is not likely to be "acceptable" to science fiction publishers—who may or may not know literature, but have a fair acquaintance with "what the public likes"—based on what the public buys.

Suggestion 5: Such a work may receive recognition from

literary critics, but the odds are high that it would not be identified by them as science fiction.

Suggestion 6: We may as well face the fact that "science fiction" has been ineradicably identified with "pulp fiction", and that expansion of the field—always possible—will not necessarily work any qualitative changes on the bulk of science fiction to be written. That is, improvement in technique is always possible, but you won't see any break through "main story" emphasis on any appreciable scale.

Suggestion 7: So we may as well stop worrying about literary recognition.

### Philadelphia Conference — 1959

An even older annual event in the world of science fiction enthusiasts than the World Convention is the Philadelphia Science Fiction Conference. "Philcon 18", as this year's gathering is called, will be held on November 14th at the Sheraton Hotel, 1725 Pennsylvania Blvd., Philadelphia. Oswald Train and George Heap, veteran fans, are managing this one, and wish to welcome all comers. For information, write to Mrs. H. Kolchak, 2104 Brandywine St., Philadelphia 30, Penna.



# The Last Word

**O**F THE FIVE stories in this issue, three received A rating from some of you, and three were given an X by at least one reader. Oddly enough, it was the top-listed tale which got both ends of the ballot.

When you mark a story A, that means you considered it outstanding; it then draws a "0" on my rating chart. An X means that you disliked the story, and didn't just put it last because you liked the others better. There were five stories in this issue, so the X votes were put down on my chart as "6". Stories just listed as "1", "2", "3", etc., go down as you put them; we total the score and divide by the number of votes, which is not the same for all, at times, since some voters did not rate each story. A perfect score for a story would be 0. The lowest a story in a five-tale issue could receive would be 6.

Some of you have voted like this: A, 1, 2, 3, 4; others have voted like this: 1A, 2, 3, 4. In both instances, I counted the A rating as 0; but the difference shows up in the rating for the other stories. However, I have to assume that you meant what you said; that the reader whose coupon read 1A, 2A, 3, 4, 5 meant the three stories which he did not consider outstanding to be put in 3, 4, and 5 slots and not 1, 2, and 3 slots.

So, here's how the September issue came out:

|                                     |      |
|-------------------------------------|------|
| 1. Eye of the Beholder (Silverberg) | 2.16 |
| 2. Special City (Barrow)            | 2.50 |
| 3. End As An Explorer (Harmon)      | 3.00 |
| 4. To Err Is Inhuman (Bradley)      | 3.50 |
| 5. Blow That Horn of Plenty (West)  | 3.83 |

## SILENCE BROKEN

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

I am writing in reference to your editorial in the Sept. '59 issue of *Science Fiction Stories*. I am a fan (of sorts) and I rarely write letters to the editor; these are my reasons for not writing.

1) I *hate* to write letters. It is now 8 years since I started to read stf in magazine form, and I have probably written a total of 10 letters, mostly to *Astounding*. My last letter to an stf magazine was one I wrote in order to get publicity (and more members) for a New York area SF club I be-



long to; the letter was printed, but all reference to this club, the Metrofen, was deleted! (Yesterday I mailed you a sample copy of our meeting notice.) Before that, I'd occasionally written letters of comment. As another example of my reticence; early this year I joined the National Fantasy Fan Federation, and received 12 letters from various members welcoming me into the club. I haven't gotten around to answering any of them yet.

2) I don't have much time to write—or, more accurately, I have other things I'd much rather do. I am a graduate student in physics, which takes up most of my time. During the Winter, I read only one SF magazine per month (*Astounding*) and a few books &/or magazines during the Christmas and Easter vacations. Everything else must wait for the summer, and then I can read less than half the stuff I've bought during the winter. (I am a slow reader, and I do have to earn some money during the Summer in order to be able to buy the stf; it took me 5 hours to read the Sept *SFS*.) Naturally, since I enjoy read-

ing stf, but hate writing, I will give a much higher priority to catching up with my reading than to writing the editor. This *is* selfish, I'll admit, and I guess that if I don't have time to write, the editor "doesn't have time" to give my SF club publicity. But still, right now I'm looking longingly at the copy of Budrys' *The Falling Torch* on my desk.

I don't know how my reasons compare with those of the other fen, for I have very little contact with them. I don't correspond, nor did I publish a fanzine (altho I intend to mail out the first issue of *Polhode* on Sept. 20 for trade, or 10¢, 3 for 25); since I joined fandom 4 years ago, I have just been going to meetings of various NY clubs & to the 2 annual local conventions.

My ratings for the Sept. *SFS* are:

1A — Eye of the Beholder (Unless something happens to change my mind, next year I'll nominate it for a Hugo.)

2A — Special City (Well written, & packed with feeling, altho the ending was a little weak. The beginning had special meaning, for half my



relatives are or were in Siberian slave camps.)

3 — End as an Explorer (Last year I subbed to a fanzine called *Varioso* as the result of a review in *Future*; one issue had a column by Harmon, so apparently he's another fan turned pro.)

4 — To Err is Inhuman (Good, but the way the ending was written, I gather that it was intended to be a surprise; it certainly wasn't!)

5 — Blow that Horn of Plenty (A little confusing due to the style of writing, but fair.)

In general, the whole issue was pretty good. But I noticed a strange coincidence. The last time I read one of your magazines from cover to cover was the Oct '58 *Future*. Then like now, the stories seemed to come in pairs. The best 2 were of almost equal quality, as were the next 2, and finally the last story stood alone.

I've noticed another strange thing about your magazines. With almost every issue of almost every other magazine, the quality of a story is directly

proportional to its length, but this doesn't hold for you. Apparently the authors send you their better shorts, but poorer novelettes.

Oh yes, the best story I ever read in a magazine of yours was Merrill's "Homecalling".

I have no objections to the new covers, but don't the issues depicting rockets sell as well as those embellished by broads?

Well, that's it for now. Writing this letter, reading it, & retyping it has taken a total of 7 hours (2 hours just to retype it), more than enough to have read *Falling Torch*. Retyping it *was* necessary, for you saw what happened to the meeting notice which I composed directly on stencil.

EDMUND R. MESKYS,  
723 45 St.,  
Brooklyn 20, New York

Of course everyone doesn't like to write letters, or doesn't have the time! And I certainly appreciate the labor and time you went to, Edmund. I've segregated sections of your letter which applied to *Future Science Fiction* for appearance in "Down To



Earth", so you'll get some extra run for your effort.)

The whole point of that editorial was not to accuse anyone, but to explain what had happened. I'll admit that the fall-off in mail over the years has proved something of a disappointment to me, as well as to other editors with whom I've discussed the subject. But my disappointment alone was not the reason why fan-slanted material was discontinued. The editor does not always have complete say as to the policy of a magazine—and what happened here was that the front office felt (and perhaps correctly, though we can't be absolutely sure) that the lack of response indicated a corresponding lack of interest on the part of the active fans—*those who have the largest stake in fan-slanted material*. Perhaps it would be better to drop such material and see if it made any difference.

What inspired writing that editorial was seeing complaints written by active fans about the fact that the science fiction magazines were no longer using fan-slanted material—and these complaints appeared not in the letter de-

partments of the science fiction magazines, but in the letter departments of fan magazines. The complaints were written not by people, like yourself, who find it difficult to write letters (or haven't the time) but who are very active in the fan magazines.

What I was trying to say then, was not, "You fellows ought to support me by writing letters to me and I think you're horrid not to do so"—after all, that *would* be self-pity, wouldn't it? No, what I was saying was, "You fellows are being silly in complaining about science fiction magazines not paying attention to you, when you can't find time to pay attention to them. Sure, it's your own business who you write letters to—but don't blame the science fiction magazines if, when a publisher wants to know whether fan-slanted material has any following, the editor can't show that it 'pulls'. You're being like voters who stay away from the polls in droves, and then lament the defeat of their favorite candidate.

Oh, by the way—the title of this magazine is SCIENCE FICTION STORIES. That



phrase "The Original" is just there to indicate that we were the *first* to use the title SCIENCE FICTION and SCIENCE FICTION STORIES, whereas all others using this title had preceded the words "Science Fiction" with some adjective—*Astounding* science fiction, etc. But it's no more a part of this magazine's title than is "The Honorable" before some distinguished person's name actually a part of his name.

### PROBLEM STATED

Dear Editor:

I think most fans still support science fiction—they just take it for granted and talk about it less. Would you assume that married people have lost interest in sex, just because they don't talk about it any more? Me, I've been out of active fandom for years, but I still read most of the available science fiction magazines, pocket-books, etc.

Without review columns in the regular magazines, I'm afraid fanzines will die out, and then where will you get replacements for fanzine-bred writers like Silverberg, Marion

Zimmer, Bradbury, Tucker, Chad Oliver, etc., and editors like yourself, Wollheim, Knight, Shaw, etc.?

J. T. OLIVER, 315 27th St.,  
Columbus, Ga.

Fan magazine review columns began to appear in the science fiction magazines because editors received hundreds of letters from readers, almost every month, asking for them. My opinion is that when this happens again, you'll see such departments popping up again.

### FROM HONG KONG

Dear Sir:

My apologies in advance for the handwriting, but I'd like to get a vote in before the deadline just once, and cannot wait for typewriter access.

You still write the best editorials in the business. Re: the current one, "Who's To Blame?" I have also bemoaned the decline of fan-slanted material in the science fiction magazines, without doing much about it except complain to my correspondents. It is a singularly unrewarding act for



me to write to a science fiction editor, anyhow—with very few exceptions, my comments on the (for example) June issue of *Unlikely BEM* reach the harried editor three issues later. He is knee-deep in the December issue, and June is ancient history. Feasibly, my comments might have some small effect on long-range policy, but otherwise, Mr. Lowndes, I don't think that I'm to blame.

After all, my first intimation that fandom existed was through the fan departments of the old *Thrilling Wonder* and *Startling Stories*. I've always liked the magazines with fan departments and big, fat letter sections. These things give a feeling of intimacy and a personality to a book which otherwise would be tacking. I always read the stories, of course, but I always read them last. First comes the editorial, the letters, the fan sections, and the science article. (When these are included.)

Yes, I'm in favor of a return to fannish things and a large, incoherent letter section. So put it all in 10-point type

to save space—most fans have young eyes and the rest of us can use an old flashlight lens.

Back to the September *Science Fiction Stories*—see the preference coupon attached, and allow me to explain the contradictory votes. Since my reading speed is about 525 words per minute, and I read a lot, I find it convenient and even informative to reread something a week or two after the first reading. Ergo, the numbers on the left are my opinion after reading once, and those on the right from the second reading. I don't know whether this information is helpful or merely confusing.

I should like to subscribe, but you make no provision for overseas postage. How much, please?

ART WILSON, c/o CAT,  
Kaitak Airport, Kowloon,  
Hong Kong

First of all—as I wrote you, Art—let me say that our overseas subscription rate is \$3.00 per year. This applies both to *Science Fiction Stories* and *Future Science Fiction*.

Like yourself, I read the departments in science fiction



magazines first; and when I was a fan, the biggest thing in each issue was the letter section. Not that I didn't read and respond to the stories, but a rousing letter department and fan department could make up for stories I didn't care for, while even with outstanding fiction I'd feel cheated if the departments were skimmed.

Your double-rating did look somewhat confusing at first, but now I find it quite interesting. (I'll note the second ratings on my sheet, since they indicate final votes.) I've found less divergences, generally, in re-reading science fiction magazines of yester-year—20 or 30 years back. A few stories, of course, no longer carry the thrill they held for me back in the 30's, etc.; some

[Turn Page]

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seem better than they did at the time. But most of them strike me as good—and I'm astonished to find the number which I remember as being just as bad the first time.

Now comes a reader who does not agree with you about my writing the best editorials in the business...

### COMMUNICATION ZERO

Dear Editor:

For the first time this morning I read your science fiction book.

However, I was a little disappointed in your editorial entitled, "Who's To Blame?" From the tone of your voice (in a sensitive application to words), I found that you are too well aware of your lack of real ap-



preciation of your readers.

What you said in sooooo many words, could have been said in a brief, concise form—and what you were really telling your readers that you do not have enough readers. And the self-pity you applied to yourself was appalling!

Get some good fiction writers in your book, some eatable stories and make the language soar to heights—not down to hellbottom, as you yourself think, feel and act.

*FRANCES*

*De BELLA,*

*135-44 118th St., So.*

*Ozone Park 20,*

*New York*

Looks as if I fell flat on my face, so far as getting the point of that editorial across to you, Frances. Just the same, I appreciate  
[Turn Page]



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your telling me so—and I'll try to make further editorial scribblings clearer. Meanwhile, does my reply to Mr. Meskys' letter above make better sense?

## LONG-STORY LOVER

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

Here's hoping I do better—last time I mailed you a letter, you only received my check. I found the letter two months later. Now I hope I don't forget the check. (Since I'm on that subject, I want 12 issues of each: *Future Science Fiction* and *Science Fiction Stories*.)

Here is how I rate the stories in the September issue of SFS: (1) "Eye of the Beholder", (2) "To Err is Inhuman", (3) "End As An Explorer", (4) "Blow That Horn of Plenty", and (5) "Special City".

By this rating, you would think that I was a short-story fan, but I'm not. I love those novels, and if one is good, it can be the entire magazine. You had real good length in your serial, "Caduceus Wild". I would like to see you get a

[Turn To Page 126]

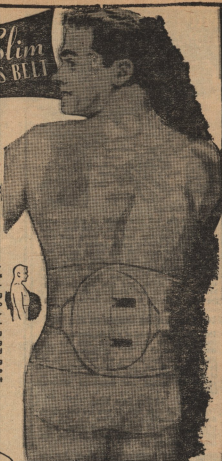


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serial from Silverberg of that length. (How about it Mr. Silverberg? Why not submit one equal to "Caduceus Wild" in length?) I am not nuts about *serials*, but it seems that that's the only way you can get any length to a story any more. As your editorial—who's to blame?

"Eye of the Beholder" and "To Err Is Inhuman"—either could have been Number One, this issue—but I'll tip my vote to Silverberg, since he is my favorite active science fiction writer.

Your cover is attractive, it stands out pretty well on the news stands. I generally spot the magazine I want easily, because they are very few. (How many science fiction magazines were be-

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ing published in 1941? That's when I momentarily stopped reading science fiction. In 1955, the word "Tarzan" caught my eye on the cover of my dear Mr. Palmer's *Other Worlds*. He had a real magazine—at least it made me start again—but soon it was all over.)

Are you going to enlarge your magazine, as *Galaxy* has done, and others may be doing? I know it is a tough decision, but here's hoping you can see some way to do so. I personally would rather pay a little extra, and have more to read.

I liked your editorial, "Who's To Blame", and I am glad you don't run fan material. I buy your magazines for the stories that are in them. "The Reck-  
[Turn Page]

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Mr. Bill Hamling had a pair of magazines that had good personality and you have reached to the point where he withdrew. I am sure that he would not have done so, if there had been any oth-

[Turn To Page 130]





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er means—he had two wonderful magazines.

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CHARLES WILSON,  
Box 904,  
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Both the letter and the check arrived safely, under the same cover, Charles. The front office thanks you for the subscription, and I thank you for both the sub and the letter.

The reason why Mr. Silverberg isn't submitting long novels, length of "Caduceus Wild", to me is that we aren't

using serials any more. Can't expect readers to wait two months between each installment of a three or four part serial. And splitting a real long one into two parts would leave too little room for anything else.

We haven't come to any decision as to whether the size (and, naturally, price) of this magazine will be increased.

Let's see—in 1941, there were 14 science fiction titles and 6 weird and/or fantasy titles. Of course, some of these did not last through the year, but even so there were still a lot of them continued into 1942. RAWL

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