THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION

STORIES AND NOVELS

1956

edited by **T. E. DIKTY**

- The annual collection of the best in science-fiction
- Containing THE SCIENCE-FICTION YEAR, a complete annual survey of the world of science-fiction
- PLUS Earl Kemp's definitive SCIENCE-FICTION BOOK INDEX

THE BEST SCIENCE-FICTION STORIES AND NOVELS: 1956

The Best Science-Fiction Stories and Novels : 1956

Edited by T. E. DIKTY

WITH *The Science-Fiction Year*, by T. E. DIKTY

AND *The Science-Fiction Book Index*, by EARL KEMP

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in friendship

and gratitude

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THE SCIENCE-FICTION YEAR

by T. E. Dikty

This was the year when the United States announced it would shortly launch an Earth satellite, when hundreds of lives were saved by the polio vaccine, and when a general announced that hundreds of millions—friend and foe—would be lost in the event of another war because of radioactive fallout.

This was the year when aviation developed platforms that flew, planes that looked like bedsteads, and planes you inflated like you did Junior's inner-tube at the beach.

This was also the year when science-fiction, after going through a substantial shakeout, began to recover from a sharp recession. Granted the recovery was spotty; nevertheless the magazines stabilized toward the end of the year and the paperbacks were doing very well, thank you.

For the statistically minded, *Fantasy Times*, the newspaper of the science-fiction world, compiled figures to show that in 1955, 109 issues of science-fiction magazines were published, costing a total of $37.25. This compared with 1954's 142 issues at a total of $47.50. In any event, this was a small enough sum to spend on one's hobby. (Preliminary figures for 1956 showed approximate totals of 96 issues costing $32.20.)

Among the magazines that died during the year were *Planet Stories*, published since 1939, and the venerable *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, first published as *Science Wonder Stories* by Hugo Gernsback in 1929. The entire Standard Magazines chain of pulp-size science-fiction magazines was discontinued, leaving only *Science-Fiction Quarterly* and *Other Worlds* in that size category. Science-fiction "pulps" were joining the nickel cigar and the wooden Indian in the dusty pages of history.

The decline in number of issues also reflected some titles reverting from a monthly status to bi-monthly. Those affected included *Imagination*

and *If*. One magazine changed its title (*Universe* to *Other Worlds*) and also size (from digest to pulp). By mid-1956, the number of titles and their frequency was holding firm.

One loss mourned by science-fiction readers was the general fiction magazine, *Bluebook*, which was discontinued in 1956. *Bluebook* had published a great number of science-fiction stories during its life, including many novels by Edgar Rice Burroughs, the memorable *When Worlds Collide*, and many of Nelson Bond's short stories. Rumors were rife that another publishing house would pick up the title, but at this writing nothing had developed.

All was not on the gloomy side, however. The major decline occurred during the first part of 1955. Towards the end of the year, *Science-Fiction Stories* increased its pages from 128 to 144 (reflecting a substantial circulation increase), and *Amazing Stories* stepped up from bi-monthly to monthly publication. (In mid-1956, the Ziff-Davis Publishing Company announced a new companion magazine for *Amazing*, to be titled *Dream Worlds*. It was scheduled for fall publication.) *Imagination* and *Imaginative Tales* added color to their inside pages.

One of the most cheering notes of 1955 was the publication of a new science-fiction magazine appropriately entitled *Infinity*. A digest-sized magazine selling for 35¢, it was edited by Larry Shaw, an old hand at science-fiction who had edited *If* magazine several years before. Started as a quarterly, by 1956 *Infinity* was firmly entrenched as a bi-monthly.

Editorial staff changes included the resignation of Bea Mahaffey from *Other Worlds* and the return of Paul Fairman as managing editor of *Amazing* and *Fantastic*. In 1956 Howard Browne resigned as editor of both these magazines to do TV script writing in Hollywood, and Mr. Fairman was elevated to the top spot. One of Howard Browne's last duties was the editing of the king-sized (260 pages) 30th anniversary issue of *Amazing*. Another last-minute change: Leo Margulies left King-Size Publications (publishers of *Fantastic Universe*) to form a new publishing company, Renown Publications, Inc. Projected magazines of the new company are *Michael Shayne Mystery Magazine* and a science-fiction magazine, *Satellite*. Hans Stefan Santesson, well-known personality in the mystery fiction field, became the new editor of *Fantastic Universe*.

That science-fiction was making something of a comeback was reflected in a sudden increase in the quality of the stories, particularly in the novel length. Leading the pack was John Campbell's *Astounding Science Fiction*, which published the serial of the year in Frank Herbert's *Under Pressure*; (ASF, November, December, 1955, January, 1956; also published as *Dragon in the Sea*, Doubleday, $2.95). A taut story of submarine warfare of the future, the novel had a more than convincing technical background and a depth of characterization seldom seen in science-fiction. *Astounding* followed this immediately with Robert A. Heinlein's *Double Star*; (ASF, February, March, April, 1956; Doubleday, $2.95). This

was Heinlein at his entertaining best—and his best novel since *The Puppet Masters*. A Heinlein juvenile had seen print the year before in one of the science-fiction magazines, but it was hardly up to the Master's standard. Another serial not to be missed was George O. Smith's *Highways in Hiding*; (*Imagination*, March, April, May, June, 1955; Gnome Press, $3.00).

Quality-wise, it looks as if 1956 will be one of the best years for science-fiction serials. At this writing, *Galaxy* has announced a new serial by Alfred Bester, author of the tour de force *The Demolished Man* (Shasta, $3.00–Signet, 25¢) which also ran serially in that magazine. Under somewhat puzzling circumstances, earlier in the year *Fantasy and Science Fiction* had also announced a serial by the prolific Mr. Bester. This was later postponed and a few months afterwards the magazine announced a year-end serial by Heinlein. For understandable reasons, fans began to watch this magazine's "Coming Next Month" page with more than the usual interest.

The science-fiction picture overseas somewhat mirrored that in the U.S. On the brighter side was the fact that Australia was recording something of a boom with three new homegrown titles and local editions of *Fantasy and Science Fiction* and *Imagination*. In England, the situation was reversed. During 1955 and the first half of 1956, eleven titles folded, including the English edition of *Fantasy and Science Fiction*. This left four homegrown titles and four American reprint magazines. Popular writer E. C. Tubb replaced Bert Campbell as editor of *Authentic Science Fiction*. Campbell left the magazine to go into scientific research.

In Germany, a major science-fiction crisis impended when the government was about to ban *Utopia* and *Utopia Grossband* on the grounds they contained "atomic war" stories. Due in large part to a plea by well-known American science-fiction fan and agent Forrest J Ackerman, the German censor board reversed its stand and allowed the magazines to continue.

The decline which affected the magazines also affected the hardcover books, though not to the extent bewailed by some of the professional critics. Restricting our statistics to American publications (a complete year's listing of books, both hard and soft covers, as compiled by Earl Kemp, is in the back of this volume), there were 67 original titles in hardcovers published in 1955, as opposed to 101 in 1954. Admittedly this was a sharp decrease, most of it reflected in the not entirely unwelcome decline in the number of anthologies. There were 20 anthologies in 1954, only 3 in 1955. The remaining hardcover books included 20 juveniles (25 in 1954), 10 one-author collections (14 in 1954), and 34 novels (42 in 1954).

In contrast, science-fiction in soft covers actually increased. There were 50 reprint paperbacks and 25 originals during the year, as opposed to 43 reprints and 21 original titles in 1954. The number of paperback anthologies was down; the number of novels—both reprint and original—gratify-

ingly up. For too many years, the cart had been put before the horse in science-fiction book publishing, with haphazard anthologies forming the bulk of what was published. In 1955 it became apparent that the novel—which logically should be the backbone of any literary field—was coming into its own.

As far as quality went, although there may not have been quite as many hardcover novels published, the people who bought them got their money's worth. Certainly a review of the year would be incomplete without a mention of C. M. Kornbluth's *Not This August* (Doubleday, $2.95) and Leigh Brackett's *The Long Tomorrow* (Doubleday, $2.95).

The Kornbluth volume, originally serialized in the Canadian slick magazine *Maclean's*, was a grimly convincing story of the year 1965 when the United States capitulates to the armed forces of Soviet Russia and Communist China. *The Long Tomorrow* was a shocker to those who associated its author, Leigh Brackett, with the more elementary, action-type science-fiction story. The novel takes place several decades after the next war and deals with the growing up of Len Colter, a young boy who lives in a somewhat Amish rural community. The writing skill and perceptive characterization put this book far above the typical science-fiction novel.

The quality of these two volumes led some observers to question the wisdom of the publisher deliberately labeling them science-fiction novels. There was little doubt that both the critical and popular acceptance of them would have been higher if they had been presented as mainstream novels.

One publisher to investigate popular reaction to science-fiction was J. B. Lippincott, which in May of 1956 published Frank M. Robinson's powerful superman novel, *The Power*, as a "novel of menace." A taut suspense thriller built around a science-fiction theme, the novel enjoyed an excellent reception, being dramatized on TV's *Studio One*, selected by the Science-Fiction Book Club and taken by Bantam Books for paperback publication.

A nonfiction book that no science-fiction reader should have missed was Dr. Robert Lindner's *The Fifty-Minute Hour*, a series of case histories of patients of Lindner, a practicing psychiatrist. The book saw three printings as a hardcover in 1955 and has had five printings as a paperback in 1956. Of particular interest to science-fiction fans was the case history of "Kirk Allen," titled *The Jet-Propelled Couch*. Originally presented in magazine form by *Harper's* magazine, the history was later reprinted by *Fantasy and Science Fiction*—and for good reason. "Kirk Allen" was the pseudonym for a research physicist who escaped the pressures of reality by retiring to a science-fiction dream world—one which he had carefully and logically built up until it was every bit as real to him as the workaday world. The "moment of truth" for Dr. Lindner came when this dream world began to be as real to him as it was to his patient. "How goes it with the Crystopeds? How are things in Seraneb?" How, indeed?

In 1956, Dr. Lindner died at the age of 41 of a heart attack. Fans

were also saddened by the death of Harold Hersey, old-time pulp editor and publisher who edited Street & Smith's *Thrill Book* back in 1919 and *Miracle Science and Fantasy* in 1931.

Science-fiction suffered another blow with the death of Fletcher Pratt. Well-known as a top naval historian, Pratt had written a number of science-fiction stories and novels and was known in later years for his collaboration with L. Sprague de Camp on a series of hilarious novels for *Unknown* and the "Gavagan's Bar" series for *Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Fans would also miss Nathan Schachner, noted historical biographer and old-time science-fiction writer. He wrote the popular "Past-Present-Future" series for *Astounding* in the 'thirties.

Hollywood had nothing to offer in the science-fiction line this year that could match Walt Disney's production last year of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. But a number of efforts were surprisingly good. Leading the list was MGM's multi-million dollar production, *Forbidden Planet*. Built around a science-fiction plot that might well have seen print in the 'thirties, the film had the best special effects since *Things To Come*. Robby the Robot was delightful, Altair 4 was wonderfully alien, and the huge underground machine of the Krell actually *did* look as though it were 20 miles long by 20 miles wide!

Not quite as successful, but still a credit to the field, was the film version of *The Body Snatchers*. A weak ending marred what might otherwise have been an outstanding movie. *Tarantula* was a latter-day King Kong, with a huge spider cast in the role of the monster. Not art, perhaps —but hot box-office.

Still with us (unfortunately) was the finny monster who had somehow survived the Black Lagoon to come back, stronger than ever, in *The Creature Walks Among Us*. Clinker of the year, oddly enough, was George Pal's much-touted *Conquest of Space*. This time no amount of special effects could make up for the wretchedly motivated story.

Awaited with a great deal of interest was the film version of Richard Matheson's *The Shrinking Man*. The story of a man who shrunk one-seventh of an inch every day and eventually had to battle a black widow spider in his own basement, the story seemed tailor-made for the movies. Worth more than passing notice was the announcement that José Ferrer had purchased the rights to *The Demolished Man* (Shasta, $3.00—Signet, 25¢). The name of Ferrer would seem to guarantee a Grade A production.

In the nonfiction film field, two items are worth special mention. The first is a semi-documentary, *On the Threshold of Space*, which deals with the activities of Air Force scientists and medical men in solving the problems man will face when he takes the big step into outer space. Another effort to acquaint the public with problems faced in conquering space was Walt Disney's TV production, *Man in Space*. An hour-long show,

the program gave the whole nation a chance to see science-fiction's Willy Ley in action.

Although professional science-fiction activities, as represented by books and magazines, had declined somewhat, science-fiction fandom was as active as ever. The "event of the year" was the world science-fiction convention held over the Labor Day weekend in Cleveland. Although somewhat smaller than past conventions, the affair rated as one of the most enjoyable. Professionals attending included Willy Ley, Martin Greenberg, Melvin Korshak, Howard Browne, William L. Hamling, Anthony Boucher, Evelyn Gold, and Larry Shaw. Authors included Dr. E. E. Smith, Dr. Isaac Asimov, Wilson Tucker, James E. Gunn, Fritz Leiber, Robert Bloch, Frank Robinson, Randall Garrett, Bob Silverberg, L. Sprague de Camp, Damon Knight, and many others.

Highpoint of the convention was the presentation of the science-fiction achievement awards at the banquet toastmastered by Anthony Boucher, editor of *Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Awards of the annual "Hugos" this year went to Mark Clifton and Frank Riley for *They'd Rather Be Right;* Walter M. Miller, Jr. for *Darfsteller;* and *Alamagoosa* by Eric Frank Russell. All of these stories first saw print in *Astounding.*

Guest of Honor at the convention was Dr. Isaac Asimov, author of the popular "Foundation" stories. A Mystery Guest of Honor turned out to be Sam Moskowitz, editor of the now defunct *Science Fiction Plus* and one of science-fiction's most devoted fans.

Hilarious highpoint of the convention was the presentation of a takeoff on Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* in which Anthony Boucher, Fritz Leiber, Robert Bloch, Sam Moskowitz, Judith Merril, Mildred Clingerman and Evelyn Gold all played parts. In the voting for next year's convention site, New York won hands down.

Although the biggest convention of the year, the Cleveland affair was not the only one. Rivalling it in size and enthusiasm was the "Fanvet" convention held in New York on April 17, 1955. Speakers included Sam Moskowitz, Theodore Sturgeon, William Gaines (comic book publisher) and John W. Campbell, Jr. The annual 1955 Midwestcon was held at Bellefontaine, Ohio, during the middle of June. The previous April had seen a regional convention held in Atlanta, Ga., while the annual West Coast science-fiction convention was held in Los Angeles in the first part of July. The convention season closed in November with the annual fall conference of the Philadelphia Science-Fiction Society.

Writers of science-fiction—at least the better ones—have long made a practice of keeping up with the world of science and, in fact, trying to anticipate it as best they can. This year, there was quite a bit to keep up with and for once, new and grim revelations of the destructive powers of hydrogen bombs were overshadowed by more cheerful tidings.

Parents throughout the nation would have no difficulty at all in point-

ing out the most significant science development during the year. This was the vaccination—after some delays—of children and expectant mothers with the Salk polio vaccine. Although not 100% effective, there was no doubt that the vaccine substantially reduced the number of cases.

It was possible that many diseases might be wiped out entirely after two University of California at Berkeley scientists, Drs. Heinz L. Fraenkel-Conrat and Robley Williams, revealed they had put together fragments of virus to make active viruses that were capable of causing disease. From this study, it was possible to deduce that viruses could be tailored to give immunity to some diseases, or that virus fragments could be used to make virus antigens capable of stimulating production of disease-fighting antibodies.

Other scientists at Berkeley, Drs. C. E. Schwerdt and F. L. Schaffer, succeeded in crystallizing the polio virus. This was the first crystallization of a virus infectious to men or animals and will be of help in further study of polio viruses.

To science-fiction fans possibly the biggest news of the year was the announcement that the U.S. would launch artificial Earth satellites sometime during the forthcoming International Geophysical Year, which starts July 1, 1957, and extends through 1958. The satellite would be small—probably not much larger than a basketball—and would be the last step in a three-step rocket to be launched from Patrick Air Force Base in Florida. It was to be unmanned (not even a mouse would go along—sorry, Mitkey) and would travel in an orbit two to three hundred miles up. The satellite program actually included a number of satellites; it was hoped that information gained from them would be helpful for mankind's own later conquest of space. According to Dr. Joseph Kaplan, chairman of the U.S. National Committee for the International Geophysical Year, at least one of the ten proposed satellites would circle for many weeks.

The International Geophysical Year, in which 40 nations will cooperate —and for which the U.S. government has already appropriated $12 million as its share of the cost—actually includes far more than just the launching of the satellites. It is a mass assault on the mysteries of man's environment, and includes studies of the upper atmosphere, studies of cosmic rays, and an Antarctic expedition.

As has been usual for the last few years, atomic energy accounted for a good part of the science news of the year. The encouraging news came from the first International Conference on the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy held in Geneva in August, 1955. Atomic information was swapped between the great powers and to almost nobody's surprise it was discovered that information held secret by both Russia and the U.S. had been discovered by each working independently. Big news of the conference was the prediction by Dr. Homi J. Bhabha, chairman of India's Atomic Energy Commission, that within 20 years energy would be pro-

duced by the controlled fusion of the light elements. A few days after Bhabha's announcement, both Great Britain and the U.S. revealed that they were working on peaceful application of the fusion reaction.

Atomic power for peaceful uses was being investigated more eagerly each year, with the realization that by the year 2000 the world will be using eight times as much energy as it does now and fossil fuels will be incapable of supplying this demand. The U.S., Great Britain and Russia had, in 1955, atomic power plants on the drawing boards or in actual use. In mid-1956 an atomic reactor went into operation at the Illinois Institute of Technology solely for industrial experimentation.

What would happen if an atomic power plant blew up has been the theme of several successful science-fiction stories. (See Lester del Rey's *Nerves* and Robert A. Heinlein's *Blowups Happen.*) The stories predicted dire consequences, but at the conference in Geneva Dr. J. R. Dietrich of Chicago's Argonne National Laboratory revealed that nothing disasterous actually would happen. In 1953 a reactor had been allowed to run wild at Los Alamos. There was a small-scale explosion, but dangerous fallout did not extend for more than a few hundred feet and most of the debris and fuel element fragments fell to the ground not more than 200 feet from the reactor proper.

Unfortunately, in a full-scale war the dangers of fallout would not be so limited. Army Lt. Gen. James M. Gavin revealed in secret testimony in May, 1956, before the Senate special subcommittee investigating airpower, that "several hundred million deaths" would result in a full-scale war with Russia. In event of a wind change, there would be several hundred million dead in Western Europe as well. The horrors of an atomic war began to look increasingly horrible.

Russia revealed plans for an atomic accelerator that would reach energies of ten billion electron volts. The University of California bevatron created an anti-proton and proved that matter would be completely annihilated in the collision of a regular proton with an anti-proton—a reaction familiar to science-fiction readers in speculations on "contra-terrene" matter.

Element 101 was made and given the name mendelevium in honor of the Russian chemist Mendeleev. The late Drs. Einstein and Fermi were honored when elements 99 and 100 were named einsteinium and fermium.

The efforts of Admiral Hyman Rickover finally bore fruit when the USS Nautilus, the first atomic submarine in the world, cruised 25,000 miles without having to refuel. The USS Seawolf, the second atomic submarine, was launched.

Also in the military line was the revelation that the "area rule" had increased plane speeds as much as 25% in ranges above that of the speed of sound. The area rule, first used on military planes in 1952, results in a pinched-in "wasp waist" design for the plane fuselage.

This year the Nobel prize in medicine went to Prof. Axel Hugo Theorell for his work with enzymes. Prof. Vincent du Vigneaud won the Nobel prize in chemistry for the laboratory duplication of certain chemicals controlling functions of the human body.

Electronic brains were in the news again. This time they were going to replace the weatherman in forecasting the weather. With the hurricane belt apparently shifted to hit populous coastal cities, electronic weather forecasting would be a highly welcome aid.

The "ducted fan" principle appeared in a flying platform developed by the Hiller Helicopter Company and the U.S. Navy. By shifting his weight, the pilot of the platform could change the direction in which he flew. The "convertiplane"—a cross between a helicopter and a pusher-type conventional plane—also appeared, as did planes with rubber wings that were inflated for use.

Other news, views, and discoveries:

The universe is older than we thought—some 6 billion years young, based upon new observations made with the Palomar telescope.

Diamonds were synthesized by a combination of tremendous pressure and temperatures of 5000°F.

The Caspian Sea is drying up.

A guided missile was developed which is guided to its target by the heat given off by said target (and in what science-fiction story did we first read about this?).

A ceramic vacuum tube was developed.

Rubber was vulcanized by exposing it to hard gamma rays from cobalt 60.

Scientists developed theories to show why there could never have been a "sunken continent" like fabled Mu or Atlantis—and other scientists advanced theories showing why there most certainly could have been. You paid your money and you took your choice.

Saddest news of the year was the death on April 18, 1955, of Albert Einstein, 76, at his home in Princeton, N.J. At the time of his death he was working on his generalized theory of gravitation meant to offer a complete description of the physical universe. Famous for his work in mathematics and physics, toward the end of his life the world came to know Professor Einstein as a great humanitarian.

And that was the wonderful world of science-fiction for the year. With every passing day Tomorrow was a little closer, and science-fiction writers had to be spry and inventive to stay ahead of onrushing technology. The world of the future was no longer just around the corner—it was racing pell mell up the block.

For the coming year, science-fiction would keep doing what it has succeeded so well at in the past: mirroring the future with a little humor, a little hope, a lot of humanity, and a great deal of excitement.

JUNGLE DOCTOR

by Robert F. Young

Snow! At first, Sarith couldn't believe her eyes. Snow on Chalce? Snow in the reception room of the Chalce Clinic?

Shivering, she looked around her. Night. A strange sky. An even stranger valley. She guessed, then, what had happened. In her excitement over her first appointment and in her impatience to get started in her chosen field, she had misjudged her transit co-ordinates and had inadvertently transmitted herself to one of Chalce's primitive neighbors.

But which one? Obviously it had to be a member of a system near the edge of the galactic lens, for the Chalce binary was remote from the main federated planets. But the transit-unit strapped around her waist demanded more accurate information than that. If she wanted to transmit herself to Chalce she had to visualize not only the correct Chalce co-ordinates, but the distance between her present position and her desired destination. To do that she had to know exactly where she was. Her transit-unit had no memory: it merely accepted data, reacted to it, and awaited further data.

Sarith shivered again. The wind-driven snow clung icily to her face, sifted down the back of her thin afternoon suit and melted coldly on her spine. She remembered the heavier clothing she had brought along for holiday treks in the Sharsh mountains, and she looked around for her traveling kit. All she saw was snow.

Even her belongings had gone astray!

Panic touched her, but she brushed it aside and forced her thoughts into an orderly pattern. The only type of planet to which a transit-unit could react was an inhabitable type, and inhabitable planets invariably supported intelligent life forms. Intelligent life forms always had a civilization of some kind, and even the crudest of civilizations included some manner of astronomical science. Her problem, then, was to contact the

local natives and probe them for whatever information they possessed concerning the location of their world.

The trouble was, there were no natives in the vicinity. Then, when the wind abated momentarily, she glimpsed a scattering of wan lights far down the valley and in sudden hope she started towards them. That was when she realized how serious her situation was. The gravity was compatible enough, but the snow was knee-deep in some places and waist-deep in others. The cold numbed her nose, her hands, her feet; penetrated her afternoon suit as though it did not exist.

She had little strength remaining when she finally reached the road, and even that little was lost. For Sarith had never heard of ditches. One moment she was wading knee-deep in snow, and the next she was floundering up to her neck in snow. She managed to scramble up the slope of the ditch to the shoulder, but the effort completed her exhaustion. She was so tired, so very tired— I'll sleep for a while, she thought. Sleep—for a while—

Lindsey washed cars days and drank nights. He walked home talking to trees, sometimes mumbling the *Sonnets From The Portuguese*, sometimes quoting passages from *Paradise Lost*. When there had been a lot of blood on the cars and he was real drunk, he concentrated on Hamlet's soliloquy. Tonight he was having a hard time of it. It wasn't the wind so much, it was the blinding snow. He kept blundering off the road and into the ditch, and once he fell ignominiously, sprawling face down right in the middle of his favorite line, "Thus conscience does make cowards of us all; and thus the native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er—"

Lindsey lay there for some time, the blood-flecked cars whirling wildly in his mind. After a while he got to his hands and knees, and thence to his feet. He stood there in the wind, swaying, a gaunt white ghost of a man. "—with the pale cast of thought," he finished deliberately. The wind tore the words apart and flung them over his shoulder.

The fall had sobered him a little, and he remembered his flashlight. He got it out and flicked it on. He moved forward into the wind, lapsing into the *Sonnets*. "Belovèd, my Belovèd, when I think that thou wast in the world a year ago—" He felt the tears begin in his eyes, and then he felt them intermingling with the melted snow on his cheeks. He tasted their salt on his lips.

His lurching body patterned the beam of the flashlight, making the light jump from road to ditch to field, and crazily back again. The swirling snow played pranks on his eyes, teasing them with fantastic shapes and shadows, turning a roadside drift into the body of a sleeping child—

Lindsey paused uncertainly. He stared down at the body, but it would not go away. He concentrated on the mass of yellow curls, on the bare white arm half covering the childish face. And then, suddenly, he was kneeling by the roadside, touching the soft hair, the thin wrist, and thinking of Silas Marner and his lost gold.

Lindsey lived in a rundown cottage a mile outside of Elmsville. Two apple trees grew riotously in the front yard and there was a 1948 Ford coupe perpetually parked in the overgrown driveway. There was a path leading between the apple trees to the front door.

The path was buried deep in drifts now, and for a while Lindsey was afraid he wasn't going to make it. But he forced his numb legs forward and after an eternity he reached the door. Inside the house he switched on the light and dropped the girl on the couch before the fireplace. Then he began to build a fire.

As soon as the wood caught, he returned to the girl. He undressed her with clumsy hands, marveling at the texture of her clothing, struck by the exotic design of her sandals. There was a silvery belt strapped around her waist beneath her gossamer underclothing. It consisted of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of tiny interwoven wires, and it was embellished by a continuous series of tiny glistening nodes. When he touched it his fingers tingled.

He tried to unfasten it, but could find no means of doing so, and finally he left it where it was and went into the bedroom for blankets. He wrapped the girl in them and began to chafe her wrists. Slowly, color came into her cheeks, and the flicker of her pulse became a steady throb.

Lindsey added more wood to the fire and returned to the couch. There was a conflicting quality about the girl's face that fascinated him. The cheeks were full, but the nose was fine and delicate, if slightly turned up; and although the chin was small, its firm lines suggested maturity.

In one way she looked like a little girl sleeping, and in another way she looked like a young woman about to wake up.

But it was her hair that fascinated him the most. In the light of the flashlight, it had looked like gold. But it wasn't gold at all—it was pure yellow, the deep, rich yellow of summer sweetcorn—

Presently Lindsey became aware of his own exhaustion, and realized with a start that he was cold sober. He went into the kitchen, found a bottle that was not quite empty, and emptied it. Returning to the living room, he switched off the overhead light and turned on the battered floor lamp by the couch. He noticed the girl's wet clothing lying in a pile on the floor, and he picked it up and spread it on the back of a chair to dry. Then he drew another chair close to the hearth and sat down.

He sat there quietly, listening to the crackling of the maple logs, feeling the soporific heat of the flames. I'll have to tell the police about her first thing in the morning, he thought. Her parents are probably crazy, wondering where she is. What was she doing out in a storm like this anyway, dressed for summer instead of winter, or maybe dressed for bed? Maybe she was running away. Kids do crazy things sometimes. Kids and people—

He'd had no intention of falling asleep. He had wanted to be there, waiting, when the girl came to, so that he could reassure her. But he was

very tired, too tired even to think of the cars. Almost without his knowing it, his head dropped back and his eyes closed.

Sarith's first reaction to the room was horror. A native hut, she thought —primitive, sordid, unkempt. Then, looking around her further, she saw the little cultural traces that years of neglect had not entirely obliterated: the ragged curtains, the moldering wallpaper, the tiers of dusty books wainscoting one of the walls.

Presently her eyes came to her clothes, and with a shock she realized her nakedness. Instantly she thought of her transit-unit, and she had a sudden demoralizing vision of herself stranded forever on a primitive planet, hopeless light years from home. Almost immediately she became aware of the familiar tingle around her waist, and she sighed with relief.

Her eyes moved from her clothes to the fire, past the fire— Suddenly she saw the sleeping man.

Again, her first reaction was horror. But it transmuted swiftly to curiosity when she reached out and touched the sleeping mind. In the long years of preparation for her profession, Sarith had traversed many strange mental corridors, but she had never been confronted by a corridor as twisted and as tortured as the corridor that stretched before her now.

Intrigued, she moved into it. The first memory she came to was a gentle picture of herself sleeping on the couch. She felt the aura of kindness pervading the picture, and with a start she thought: A child! He thinks I am a little child! And then, wonderingly: He saved my life. This poor wretched creature saved my life!

She went on. The corridor curved abruptly and she saw the endless rows of alien vehicles stretching on and on into infinity. She approached them closely and saw the flecks of blood on them, and for a moment she doubted the validity of her own psi-vision. What manner of complex is this, she wondered. What manner of mechanized culture have I blundered into?

She bypassed the vehicle sequence and came to the girl. The girl was tall and dark-haired and very beautiful in an alien way, and she was standing, sitting, reclining in a thousand different poses. Her name was Elaine, and she was dead. Sarith knew she was dead even before she saw the gray memory of the bier.

She became aware then of the sleeping man's anguish, his pain. And suddenly she saw the love he bore for the girl. It was a love so deep and profound, and so permeated with dull, aching regret, that she had to turn away from it.

That was when she saw the vault.

Just as the corridor was a concrete analogy supplied by her own mind to give substance to a psi-structure that otherwise would have been intangible, so was the vault an analogy—the most apt analogy her trained faculties could supply—to give substance to an experience which the sleeping man had buried deeply in his subconscious.

Sarith tried to open it, but its analogous door was tightly secured and defied her mental strength. Finally she desisted. There were other items of far more importance than repressed experiences to be garnered from the native's mind. The locale of his planet, for one, and the locale of Chalce, for another.

Provided such information was available.

She left the emotional level symbolized by the corridor, and delved into the accumulated data beneath. First she assimilated the language; then she went on to learn that the planet's name was Earth and that it was the third of nine orbiting a Go star somewhere near the perimeter of the galactic lens. All of which was excellent information and on a much higher plane than she had anticipated—but still not good enough.

Presently she found a half-remembered star map, and her heart began to pound. But the details were dim and she could not make them out. On an inspiration she traced the map to its source and was delighted to discover that the original was part of a book stored in the very room in which she lay.

She departed swiftly from the sleeping man's mind. The room was gray with dawn. She wriggled out of the blankets and dressed in the wan warmth of the diminished fire; then started round the couch to the tiers of books.

Her route took her close to the chair where the man slept, and remembering the twisted corridor, the rows of incarnadine vehicles, the myriad pictures of the girl, but most of all remembering the vault, she paused and gazed down into the sleeping face.

Then, for a moment, she forgot the books and the star map; the sordid room itself. For a moment she even forgot Chalce. For the face was like no face she had ever seen before. It was a face that had aged beyond its years, yet still retained traces of youth; a face of shadowed eyes and drawn mouth; of thin cheeks, and a forehead horizontally excoriated by the whiplash of self-torture.

It was the face of a sick and dying man.

As she stood there, cold with the new knowledge, the sleeper stirred, awakened—

They were the bluest eyes that Lindsey had ever seen, and they were set far apart in the fairest face that he had ever seen. At the moment their sole *raison d'etre* seemed to be him.

He straightened in the chair, feeling the stiffness of his legs and back. He looked around the room, surprised at the dawn light. The events of the preceding night came back slowly.

He returned his eyes to the girl. "How do you feel?" he asked.

She didn't answer right away. He got the impression she was searching for the right words. Finally: "I feel all right," she said. "Thank you for saving my life."

He looked at her closely. Her words had been full and clear, her in-

tonation perfect. Perhaps that was the trouble; you didn't expect flawless diction from a thirteen- or fourteen-year-old child.

"I'm glad you're okay," Lindsey said. "I was a little worried last night. What's your name?"

"Sarith."

"Mine's Gordon. Gordon Lindsey. Where do you live?"

There was a pause during which the blue eyes regarded him searchingly. Then: "I live a long ways from here, Mr. Lindsey."

"That's not much of an answer. What town do you live in? What state?"

"I'm afraid I can't tell you."

"Why not?"

"Because it would sound absurd to you. Besides, it doesn't matter. I'll be leaving soon."

"But I'd like to help you," Lindsey said. "Are you in some kind of trouble? Did you run away and get stranded in the storm?"

"I'm afraid I can't tell you that either."

"But why not? You're going to have to tell the police."

"The police?"

"Why of course. I've got to report finding you. Your parents are probably looking all over the countryside for you right now."

"My parents are not looking for me, Mr. Lindsey."

Lindsey stood up. "I've got to report you anyway," he said.

I should take her down to the police station, he thought. But she'd only freeze all over again in those thin clothes. I'll drop in the station on my way to work and tell them to stop by for her. I can't keep her here—

Suddenly he was conscious of the intensity of the girl's eyes. Their blueness seemed to incandesce, to stab into his mind; and yet he felt no pain other than the dull throbbing of the hangover that was always with him. And then, abruptly, her eyes resumed their normal hue, and he was at a loss to explain whether their metamorphosis had been real or imaginary. Considering the fact that it was early in the morning and he hadn't had his first drink yet, the latter contingency seemed the more probable.

He built up the fire; then went into the kitchen and fried the girl some eggs, and made a pot of coffee. Sarith approached the eggs diffidently, employing a spoon instead of a fork. Sipping his coffee across the table from her, Lindsey could have sworn she had never seen an egg before. But apparently she liked them, for she cleaned her plate thoroughly.

"If you get hungry later on, you can fix yourself something to eat." He showed her where the canned goods were. Then he donned his denim jacket and went to the door. No sense telling her the police are coming,

he decided. She'd only be upset, and she might run away again. "I'm going to work now. You be a good little girl till I get back."

He took a good look at her before he went out. He wanted to remember her face, her eyes, her childish mouth; and above all he wanted to remember the sweet-corn shade of her hair—the gold he had found in the snow and couldn't keep, because he was living in the twentieth century, and because he was a drunk.

A good little girl! Sarith was furious. Here she was, a graduate psi-therapist, a resident psi-therapist in the greatest mental clinic in the galactic federation, and in the eyes of this technological savage she was nothing but a little girl!

And yet his thoughts were so kind, she thought. Beautiful almost. Gold in the snow— No one ever thought that way about my hair before. But if I'm going to get to Chalce I'll never do so standing here. By the time he gets back I can be light years away, interviewing my first patient, possibly—

My first patient.

No, not really my first. This poor savage is my first, in a way. But of course, he doesn't count. I've no time to bother with him and his wretched vault. There must be medicine men in his society. They should be capable of dealing with his sickness.

But why don't they come to him? Why do they let him suffer?

She stamped her foot angrily. Well, I don't care, she thought. I'm not going to concern myself about it. Why, this isn't even a federated planet. And why should I worry about him anyway? He's going to report me to his wretched native police force and have me taken off his hands.

Or at least he thinks he is.

She smiled at the thought of the block she had imposed. In better humor she went over to the wainscoting of books and began searching for the one she had seen in Lindsey's mind.

The storm had blown itself out during the night and the February morning was crisp and blue-skied. Lindsey walked in the middle of the road, giving the cars a hard time as he always did, never moving out of the way till the last second, and then giving them just enough room to go by. There weren't many cars that morning though; the snowplow hadn't come through yet and the drifts were discouragingly deep.

The road was officially designated Route 16, and before the Throughway had bypassed the town it had been a heavily traveled highway. Now it was just another road, servicing local traffic. It came into Elmsville on the north, became Locust Street for a while, then turned right and became Main Street, going down a hill and across a viaduct, finally turning left, leaving the town and becoming Route 16 again.

The garage where Lindsey worked was at the bottom of the hill, on the other side of the viaduct. There was a drug store on the corner where

he had to turn to go down the hill, and right next door to the drug store was the police station.

He had every intention of stopping in and telling the night clerk about the girl. He even had the words framed in his mind and ready to deliver. He was surprised, then, when he walked right by the frosted door and on down the hill.

He made an effort to turn around and go back. He went right on walking. He frowned. He knew that in his heart he didn't want to report the girl, that he liked to think of her there in his house, waiting for him to come home. But just the same, he had to report her. For her parents' sake, if not her own. And if her parents were dead, or had deserted her, there still had to be someone, somewhere, who was concerned about her.

Not necessarily, though. There were plenty of kids around that no one wanted. There were cases in the paper every day— Oh, the hell with it! he thought suddenly. I'll report her this noon.

Across the viaduct there was a metal sign over the walk that said, NICK'S GARAGE—CARS GREASED, WASHED & REPAIRED. Across the street from Nick's, there was a neon sign—anemic now in the morning sunlight—that said, SAM'S STOP-OVER—RESTAURANT & GRILLE.

Lindsey crossed the viaduct diagonally, contemptuous of the passing cars, and helped Sam open up. Then he waited impatiently at the bar till the backbar clock registered the legal hour of 8:00 A.M., and after ordering and downing his usual eye-opener, a double shot with beer chaser, he recrossed the street and went to work.

There was only one car to wash that morning—one that had been left the night before. After Lindsey washed it, doing his usual meticulous job and making sure all the blood was off, Nick put him to work sweeping. When Lindsey finished sweeping, Nick put him to work wiping down the grease-job equipment. Once Nick had let Lindsey wait on the front, but never again. Lindsey wouldn't get out of the way of the cars and several times he'd come close to being run down. Nick wasn't partial to drunks, especially educated drunks, and he wouldn't have cared particularly if Lindsey had got run down; but you had to think of the insurance rates, and besides car wash men were hard to get.

At noon Lindsey crossed the street to the Stop-Over again and consumed what was known locally as the Lindsey Lunch—three double shots, three beers, and a ham on rye. He didn't go near the police station. The car wash business picked up that afternoon. It was Friday, and the February sun hinted that a pleasant weekend might be coming up. Lindsey washed five cars. There was a lot of blood on the last one and he knew he needed a drink pretty bad, but he made sure he washed it all off. It was quitting time by then, and he returned to the Stop-Over.

After three double shots, things steadied a little. But some of the blood had come off on his hands and it took four more double shots to make it

go away. Lindsey felt pretty good by then. He sat quietly at the end of the bar, watching the customers come and go, nodding to the handful he knew, seeing the shadows lengthen on the street.

Pretty soon Elaine came in and sat beside him. She'd been to the library again and there was a little piece of paper marking her place in the book she had borrowed.

Hi, baby, he said.

Hello, Gordon.

There was a presumptuous autumn leaf clinging to her suede jacket, and he reached over and brushed it off. He touched the book tucked under her arm.

What are we reading now? he asked.

Just something I happened to pick up.

He slipped the book from under her arm and opened it. *Sonnets From The Portuguese*, he read. Aren't you the literary young thing, though!

Not really, she said. I just thought I'd like to read them.

He turned the pages to the bookmark. One of the sonnets was underlined, and he began to read it aloud: *And wilt thou have me fashion into speech*—it was noisy in the college cafeteria and he had to raise his voice—*the love I bear thee, finding words enough*—

She took over.

And hold the torch out, while the winds are rough, between our faces, to cast light on each? I drop it at thy feet. I cannot teach my hand to hold my spirit so far off from myself—that I should bring thee proof in words, of love hid in me out of reach—

Say, you already know it, he said.

I memorized it today.

Suddenly he saw the way her eyes were. There was a new quality in them—a mistiness that softened them and made them different from any woman's eyes he had ever seen before. And then he felt cheap and shoddy, undeserving of the idealism with which she had clothed him. And yet at the same time he felt relieved; thankful that he would no longer need to conceal his love for her with affected indifference and flippant remarks.

He riffled the pages of the book, stopped them finally. He began to read—

Belovèd, my Belovèd, when I think that thou wast in the world a year ago, what—

The hours passed.

"—time I sat alone here in the snow and saw no footprint, heard the silence sink no moment at thy voice, but—"

"Okay, Lindy, that's all for you."

Elaine blurred, faded away. The college cafeteria disintegrated and a lovely autumn afternoon became a bleak February night. Slowly the Stop-

Over came into focus, the Stop-Over, and Sam standing on the other side of the bar with the familiar shut-off look in his eyes.

Lindsey shrugged. He drank the rest of his shot and stood up. "To hell with you, Sam," he said, and walked out.

There were other bars.

He stopped in three of them before he started for home. He was in the "soliloquy" stage by then, and the road was far too narrow for his erratic progress. Once a new Buick nearly ran him down. Lindsey stood weaving in the darkness after it had passed, cursing the dwindling tail-lights, cursing the impulse that had made him leap aside at the last moment.

He had forgotten all about the girl, and he was astonished to see a light in his window and smoke wreathing up from his chimney into the crisp night. He was even more astonished when he entered the house and saw his books scattered all over the floor, with the girl in the midst of them, one of them open on her lap. . . .

Finding the book that contained the star map had been simple, and the star map, while crude, had been accurate enough to enable her to orient herself. On it, the Chalce binary bore the fanciful appellation of Alpha Centauri.

To establish her position and to determine the distance to Chalce, all she had to do was substitute the corresponding sector of her eidetic star map. That required but a moment, and she could have transmitted herself then and there.

But she didn't.

For one thing, there was the vault in her host's mind. No matter how many times she told herself that Lindsey wasn't really her first patient, the relentless fact recurred that, patient or not, his was the most baffling mind she had ever entered, and therefore a challenge to her newly acquired abilities as a psi-therapist.

And then, for another thing, there were the books. They were surprisingly varied, and some of them were on an intellectual plane considerably higher than she had thought possible in so barbaric a culture. She had read them, every one, pausing only to eat and to rebuild the fire, and finally she had come to the one that interested her the most.

Interested, and infuriated her. A book by Albert Schweitzer.

Self-centered savage! she thought. Bargaining his life for nobility. Running off to a little jungle clearing and playing god to a handful of unwashed aborigines. And believing, actually believing in his heart, that his motivation is spiritual!

Her mood had calmed by the time Lindsey arrived, but dregs of her anger still remained. She rechanneled them in his direction. Just look at the chaotic creature! she thought. Permeated, utterly permeated with the distilled grain he imbibes to wash away reality!

She laid the book aside and stood up. "I thought you were going to report me to the police," she said coldly.

"The police," Lindsey said, swaying. He shook his head vaguely. "I didn't," he said. "Somehow I didn't. I don't know why." He looked bewilderedly at the scattered books. "My books—" he began.

She saw the thought in his mind and intercepted his words. "I was only reading them," she said. Did children *mutilate* books in this horrid society?

"But you're so young," Lindsey said. "So young to be reading Shakespeare, Hegel— Schweitzer."

He stepped forward and nearly fell. Sarith saw how bad he was then, and she helped him out of his jacket and over to the chair by the fire. She peeked into the corridor and saw all the cars, and suddenly contrition overcame her.

"Sit down and rest," she said softly. "Are you hungry?"

But Lindsey's head had already fallen back and his eyes had closed. For a shocked moment, Sarith thought he was dead, but then she saw the movement of his chest and heard the hoarse sound of his breathing.

For some time she stood immobile beside the chair, then she went over and sat down on the couch.

I could leave this instant, she thought. With a flick of my mind I could escape from this slovenly hovel, this forsaken psychopath, this jungle clearing. In an instant I could be in the Chalce Clinic and see the lucid walls rising around me, and through the walls the eternal summer landscape stretching away to the pink Sharsh mountains—

The native twisted in his chair, moaned softly in his sleep.

Sarith sighed. . . .

At first the over-all pattern of the corridor seemed the same. Just past the entrance there was a blue-eyed image of herself, but sitting in the middle of the living room floor this time instead of sleeping on the couch; and then the sudden curve and all the cars.

Abruptly Sarith saw the man moving among the cars. Washing them. Furiously, desperately, meticulously washing them.

The man was Lindsey.

There were so many cars, and all of them had flecks of blood on them. The new cars were the worst because so many of them were red and you could never really tell if all the blood was off, and you had to get it off, some way, somehow, because it had no right to be there, it was wrong for it to be there, horribly, shamefully, unforgivably wrong—

Shuddering, Sarith ran past the car sequence and came to the mental images of the girl named Elaine. She did not view them haphazardly this time, but tried to arrange them in their proper chronological order.

As nearly as she could ascertain, the first image was the one where Elaine was sitting in what appeared to be a primitive classroom. There were vague faces all around her, but hers was the only one that stood

out: flashing black eyes beneath dark winged brows, rather high cheek bones, cheeks filled with the pinkness of youth, a wide mouth parted in a warm smile. A beautiful face, Sarith had to admit, though by her own standards it seemed old.

The next image had to be the one where Lindsey and Elaine were walking together across a close-cropped sward beneath tall stately trees. In the background were vine-garnished buildings reminiscent of a different, far more dignified age.

And the one after that was probably the one where Elaine was entering what seemed to be a public eating place of some kind, carrying a thin book under her arm. It was a particularly vivid image, for Sarith could see a tiny piece of paper marking one of the pages of the book, and she could even see a small colored leaf on the girl's shoulder—

There were so many images that she could not study each of them individually but had to skim through them, dwelling longest over the ones she considered to be the most essential:

Elaine's face, painstakingly remembered, the lashes of the closed eyes a delicate fringe lightly touching the soft cheeks, the upturned mouth a pale crimson flower about to bloom—

Elaine's hand, and a golden band being slipped on one of the fingers—

Elaine's profile silhouetted against the background of a tremendous cataract—

Elaine standing in the doorway of a small building, waving— (The building was newly painted, asparkle with white siding and green shutters; nevertheless, Sarith recognized it as the native hut in which she sat.)

Elaine and Lindsey meandering through meadows green with summer—

Elaine and Lindsey in a familiar room, packing clothing into leather containers— (This room, Sarith thought. This very room!)

Elaine lying in her bier among wreaths and blankets of flowers, her cheeks no longer pink, but white and cold; her eyes closed forever—

Puzzled, Sarith went through the images again. At first she thought she had missed one, the most essential one of all. But her second survey netted her nothing: there was no image that threw any light whatsoever on the circumstances of Elaine's death.

Suddenly she remembered the vault. Why of course!

She approached it confidently, but her knowledge of the nature of its contents was not enough; she still couldn't open it. For a moment she was furious, and she pounded on the symbolized door with angry psi-fists. Then she calmed herself. She was behaving like a child instead of a graduate psi-therapist.

She remembered her training. There were more ways than one to uncover a repressed experience. When ordinary psi-techniques failed, there was always word association, and the association words, in this instance, were right at her fingertips: Elaine, car, blood, death.

But in order to apply them, she would have to wait till Lindsey awoke.

She withdrew from his mind. His breathing was deep, labored. It would be morning, at least, before awareness returned to that drink-saturated mind.

There was nothing for it but to spend another night in the cramped little room. But in the morning I'll be free, she thought—free to leave this psychopathic jungle and carry on my work among civilized patients with civilized complexes.

But civilized or not, Lindsey's complex intrigued her more than any of those with which she had come in contact during her long internship. Why does he see blood on the cars? she thought. Is it possible that there really is blood on them?

She knew what cars were, of course, by then. She had seen many of them passing on the road during the day and she had identified them with the images in Lindsey's mind. But she had never seen a real one at close range, so she couldn't be absolutely sure whether Lindsey's preoccupation was normal or psychopathic.

Then she remembered the car that stood in the yard outside. Suddenly curious, she got up from the couch and slipped out of the house. In the east a gibbous moon was rising, and the snow-covered yard was silvered. The car was an ugly blob in the silvered snow, on a line with the corner of the house. Sarith approached it closely. It was quite old, she saw, and it had not been moved for a long time. The weather had been unkind to it; its tires were rotted, and its sides were streaked with rust. One of its doors was open and hanging by one hinge. The interior smelled of mold and decay.

She walked around the car in the moonlight. There was no blood on it as far as she could see.

At least not now. . . .

Sarith slept badly. She twisted and turned on the couch, thinking over and over of the car in the yard. And all through the night she was vaguely conscious of a growing uneasiness, an uneasiness that had nothing to do with the abandoned car and its potential implications but which was related in some way to her physical *status quo*. It wasn't until dawn was a gray ghost in the room that she realized what was wrong.

In her excitement over her first appointment and in her eagerness to get started in her chosen field, she had not only misjudged her co-ordinates, but she had also forgotten to replenish the energy cells of her transit-unit. The tingle around her waist had faded to a faint titillation.

Her first impulse was to transit to Chalce immediately. As long as the unit contained any life at all it would function for so relatively brief a distance. But then her eyes touched the man sleeping in the chair, and she remembered the vault, and she realized that if she did not discover its contents before she left she would be haunted for the rest of her life. And it was out of the question for her to transit to Chalce, replenish her unit, and then return, for once on Chalce her residency would auto-

matically go into effect. While a residency was not restrictive in a planetary sense, it was definitely restrictive in a galactic sense. A resident psi-therapist was on constant call, and except for her biennial sabbatical, was never permitted to transit beyond the Chalcean horizons.

There was still time to learn the nature of the buried experience, but not time enough for word association subtleties. She had to make a direct approach and risk aggravating Lindsey's complex still further. There was no other way.

She got up, dressed, and went over to the chair. She was about to shake Lindsey into wakefulness when she saw the fluttering of his eyelids, detected the slight change in his breathing.

The eyes seemed even bluer than before, and more absorbed in him than ever. Lindsey straightened up in the chair, felt the renewed throb of the endless hangover. He was totally unprepared when the girl said, "Why did you murder your wife, Mr. Lindsey?"

At first his mind fought back the words, refused to assimilate them. But gradually they got through his defenses and stabbed into his consciousness. The room reeled around him, and he raised a trembling hand to his throbbing head. In spite of everything he could do, the present tore ahead and the past came walking arrogantly through the rent. Seven years absconded and the ghastly day returned—

It was the Tuesday following the Labor Day weekend, the Tuesday marking the end of sweet summer—that dreaming honeymoon in the cottage he and Elaine had bought on the outskirts of the little town so that they would always have some faraway place to come to whenever their new posts at the university permitted.

Bitter Tuesday.

Bitter with the aftermath of their first quarrel. . . .

Lindsey threw the suitcases into the trunk of the new Ford, slammed the trunk cover shut, and went around and got into the driver's side. He started up the car and let the motor idle, then he sat there hating Elaine.

Elaine was still in the cottage, smearing silly lipstick on her lips, touching up her cheeks with unnecessary rouge.

Lindsey waited for her to come out, lock the back door, and get into the car. He thought up cruel, cutting things to say to her, sitting there in the car, the motor idling.

His resentment smoldered in him as the minutes whispered past. She was deliberately making him wait, deliberately trying to show him that she didn't care if they *never* made up.

Well, he didn't care either!

He gripped the steering wheel angrily, raced the motor loudly so that she would hear it and know that he didn't care.

Abruptly the front door slammed, and the thought that she had decided to go out the front way when she knew perfectly well that he was waiting at the back was a catalyst to his anger. He shifted into reverse and brought

his foot down hard on the accelerator—harder than he had intended. The car shot back wildly. His desperate foot found the brake and bore down hard, but the scream had already shattered the September day by then, and the sickening lurch of the car as the back wheels passed over the soft, beloved body was already an excruciating memory.

And then he was out of the car and running around to where Elaine lay crumpled on the gravel, and seeing the startled disbelief on her gray and dying face and the accusation in her dilated eyes, and then seeing the drops of red on the gleaming fender and the crimson smear on the white sidewalls of the tire. . . .

Lindsey was back in the present. He got up from the chair and found his way out of the room and into the morning. The wind was from the south, and the snow was melting, and the car was sitting in the drive the way he had left it seven years ago. There was no corpse beneath it now, and the blood had long since washed away. And yet it was still there—

He got to the road somehow, and he walked down the middle of the road, praying that a car would come. Come swiftly. Mercifully—

So now you know, Sarith thought. Now you can go to Chalce.

You can go to Chalce and take up your residency. You can forget all about this miserable savage who imagines he killed his mate because her eyes accused him when she died.

Who washes imaginary blood off cars as part of a self-inflicted penance and who drinks himself into insensibility because the penance is too much for him to bear.

Who wanders the dim trails of his jungle civilization hoping that a careless driver will perform the task which he cannot find the courage to perform for himself.

Who is a victim of his own sensitivity—a poor wanderer in this jungle civilization wherein the physician does not come to the maimed but expects the maimed to come to him.

Except for one physician; only one. And perhaps he *is* noble, after all, this jungle doctor in his primitive African province, writing his *Philosophy of Civilization* in his corrugated iron hut, playing his Bach in stolen moments, administering to the strangulated hernias of his flock—

Now you can go, Sarith. Now.

To the clean, chaste corridors of the Chalce Clinic and the clean, uncomplicated minds of the federated patients whom the peripatetic therapists have deemed in need of institutional care.

And you can begin the noble task of alleviating their picayune frustrations, of reanimating their sexual desires, of refurbishing their egos—

He picked me up, out of the snow, and carried me to the crude hovel he calls his home. He was concerned about me. I was a living creature, and despite the pain of his years and the horrid apathy of his days he was concerned with the life in me.

This sick savage. This jungle wanderer.

And what a vast jungle it must be! Far larger than Lambaréné. There must be many Lindseys wandering its dim trails, maimed of mind and spirit. Many many Lindseys. And no jungle doctor to ease their dumb pain—

Now you can go, Sarith. *Now!*

Lindsey had never seen so much blood on a car. He scrubbed and scrubbed, but it wouldn't come off. Presently Nick came over to where Lindsey was kneeling at the back left fender of the Chrysler. "What's the matter with you?" Nick said. "You should have finished that car a long time ago!"

Lindsey didn't say anything. Nick didn't understand about the blood. No one understood about the blood, about how it was always there, Elaine's blood, and you had to wash it away, you couldn't leave it there, it was wrong to leave it there, horribly, shamefully, unforgivably wrong. If someone would understand, perhaps there wouldn't be so much blood, perhaps there wouldn't be any blood at all—

There was so much blood this morning that it was too much for one person to wash away. He scrubbed furiously—

"Hey!" Nick shouted. "Are you crazy? You'll ruin the finish! You'll—"

Nick's voice floundered, trailed away. Lindsey saw the exotic sandals then, and the slender legs rising above them. When Sarith knelt beside him her face seemed older somehow, and there was a quality in her eyes that made him think of Christ.

She took the sponge from his bleeding hands.

"Let me help you," she said.

JUDGMENT DAY

by L. Sprague de Camp

It took me a long time to decide whether to let the earth live. Some might think this an easy decision. Well, it was and it wasn't. I wanted one thing, while the mores of my culture said to do the other.

This is the decision that few have to make. Hitler might give orders for the execution of ten million, and Stalin orders that would kill another ten million. But neither could send the world up in a puff of flame by a few marks on a piece of paper.

Only now has physics got to the point where such a decision is possible. Yet, with due modesty, I don't think my discovery was inevitable. Somebody might have come upon it later—say in a few centuries, when such things might be better organized. My equation was far from obvious. All the last three decades' developments in nuclear physics have pointed away from it.

My chain-reaction uses *iron*, the last thing that would normally be employed in such a series. It's at the bottom of the atomic energy-curve. Anything else can be made into iron with a release of energy, while it takes energy to make iron into anything else.

Really, the energy doesn't come from the iron, but from the . . . the other elements in the reaction. But the iron is necessary. It is not exactly a catalyst, as it is transmuted and then turned back into iron again, whereas a true catalyst remains unchanged. But the effect is the same. With iron so common in the crust of the earth, it should be possible to blow the entire crust off with one big *poof*.

I recall how I felt when I first saw these equations, here in my office last month. I sat staring at my name on the glass of the door, "Dr. Wade Ormont," only it appears backwards from the inside. I was sure I had made a mistake. I checked and rechecked and calculated and recalculated. I went through my nuclear equations at least thirty times. Each time my

heart, my poor old heart, pounded harder and the knot in my stomach grew tighter. I had enough sense not to tell anybody else in the department about my discovery.

I did not even then give up trying to find something wrong with my equations. I fed them through the computer, in case there was some glaring, obvious error I had been overlooking. Didn't that sort of thing—a minus for a plus or something—once happen to Einstein? I'm no Einstein, even if I am a pretty good physicist, so it could happen to me.

However, the computer said it hadn't. I was right.

The next question was: What to do with these results? They would not help us towards the laboratory's objectives: more powerful nuclear weapons and more efficient ways of generating nuclear power. The routine procedure would be to write up a report. This would be typed and photostated and stamped "Top Secret." A few copies would be taken around by messenger to those who needed to know about such things. It would go to the AEC and the others. People in this business have learned to be pretty close-mouthed, but the knowledge of my discovery would still spread, even though it might take years.

I don't think the government of the United States would ever try to blow up the world, but others might. Hitler might have, if he had known how, when he saw he faced inevitable defeat. The present Commies are pretty cold-blooded calculators, but one can't tell who'll be running their show in ten or twenty years. Once this knowledge gets around, anybody with a reasonable store of nuclear facilities could set the thing off. Most would not, even in revenge for defeat. But some might threaten to do so as blackmail, and a few could actually touch it off if thwarted. What's the proportion of paranoids and other crackpots in the world's population? It must be high enough, as a good fraction of the world's rulers and leaders have been of this type. No government yet devised—monarchy, aristocracy, theocracy, timocracy, democracy, dictatorship, soviet, or what have you—will absolutely stop such people from coming to the top. So long as these tribes of hairless apes are organized into sovereign nations, the nuclear Ragnarök is not only possible but probable.

For that matter, am I not a crackpot myself, calmly to contemplate blowing up the world?

No. At least the psychiatrist assured me my troubles were not of that sort. A man is not a nut if he goes about gratifying his desires in a rational manner. As to the kind of desires, that's nonrational anyway. I have adequate reasons for wishing to exterminate my species. It's no high-flown farfetched theory either; no religious mania about the sinfulness of man, but a simple, wholesome lust for revenge. Christians pretend to disapprove of vengeance, but that's only one way of looking at it. Many other cultures have deemed it right and proper, so it can't be a sign of abnormality.

For instance, when I think back over my fifty-three years, what do I remember? Well, take the day I first entered school . . .

I suppose I was a fearful little brute at six: skinny, stubborn, and precociously intellectual. Because my father was a professor, I early picked up a sesquipedalian way of speaking—which has been defined as a tendency to use words like "sesquipedalian." At six I was sprinkling my conversation with words like "theoretically" and "psychoneurotic." Because of illnesses I was as thin as a famine-victim, with just enough muscle to get me from here to there.

While I always seemed to myself a frightfully good little boy whom everyone picked on, my older relatives in their last years assured me I was nothing of the sort, but the most intractable creature they ever saw. Not that I was naughty or destructive. On the contrary, I meticulously obeyed all formal rules and regulations with a zeal that would have gladdened the heart of a Prussian drill-sergeant. It was that in those situations that depend, not on formal rules, but on accommodating oneself to the wishes of others, I never considered any wishes but my own. These I pursued with fanatical single-mindedness. As far as I was concerned, other people were simply inanimate things put into the world to minister to my wants. What they thought I neither knew nor cared.

Well, that's my relatives' story. Perhaps they were prejudiced, too. Anyway, when I entered the first grade in a public school in New Haven, the fun started the first day. At recess a couple grabbed my cap for a game of siloochee. That meant that they tossed the cap from one to the other while the owner leaped this way and that like a hooked fish trying to recover his headgear.

After a few minutes I lost my temper and tried to brain one of my tormentors with a rock. Fortunately, six-year-olds are not strong enough to kill each other by such simple means. I raised a lump on the boy's head, and then the others piled on me. Because of my weakness I was no match for any of them. The teacher dug me out from the bottom of the pile.

With the teachers I got on well. I had none of the normal boy's spirit of rebellion against all adults. In my precocious way I reasoned that adults probably knew more than I, and when they told me to do something I assumed they had good reasons and did it. The result was that I became teacher's pet, which made my life that much harder with my peers.

They took to waylaying me on my way home. First, they would snatch my cap for a game of siloochee. The game would develop into a full-fledged baiting-session, with boys running from me in front, jeering, while others ran up behind to hit or kick me. I must have chased them all over New Haven. When they got tired of being chased they would turn around, beat me—which they could do with absurd ease—and chase me for a while. I screamed, wept, shouted threats and abuse, made growling and hissing noises, and indulged in pseudo-fits like tearing my hair and foaming at

the mouth in hope of scaring them off. This was just what they wanted. Hence, during most of my first three years in school, I was let out ten minutes early so as to be well on my way to my home on Chapel Street by the time the other boys got out.

This treatment accentuated my bookishness. I was digging through Millikan's *The Electron* at the age of nine.

My father worried vaguely about my troubles but did little about them, being a withdrawn bookish man himself. His line was medieval English literature, which he taught at Yale, but he still sympathized with a fellow-intellectual and let me have my head. Sometimes he made fumbling efforts to engage me in ball-throwing and similar outdoor exercises. This had little effect, since he really hated exercise, sport, and the outdoors as much as I did, and was as clumsy and uncoördinated as I to boot. Several times I resolved to force myself through a regular course of exercises to make myself into a young Tarzan, but when it came to executing my resolution I found the calisthenics such a frightful bore that I always let them lapse before they had done me any good.

I'm no psychologist. Like most followers of the exact sciences, I have an urge to describe psychology as a "science," in quotes, implying that only the exact sciences like physics are entitled to the name. That may be unfair, but it's how many physicists feel.

For instance, how can the psychologists all these years have treated sadism as something abnormal, brought on by some stupid parent's stopping his child from chopping up the furniture with a hatchet, thereby filling him with frustration and insecurity? On the basis of my own experience I will testify that all boys—well, perhaps ninety-nine per cent—are natural-born sadists. Most of them have it beaten out of them. Correct that: most of them have it beaten down into their subconscious, or whatever the head-shrinkers call that part of our minds nowadays. It's still there, waiting a chance to pop up. Hence crime, war, persecution, and all the other ills of society. Probably this cruelty was evolved as a useful characteristic back in the Stone Age. An anthropological friend once told me this idea was fifty years out of date, but he could be wrong also.

I suppose I have my share of it. At least I never wanted anything with such passionate intensity as I wanted to kill those little fiends in New Haven by lingering and horrible tortures. Even now, forty-five years after, that wish is still down there at the bottom of my mind, festering away. I still remember them as individuals, and can still work myself into a frenzy of hatred and resentment just thinking about them. I don't suppose I have ever forgotten or forgiven an injury or insult in my life. I'm not proud of that quality, but neither am I ashamed of it. It is just the way I am.

Of course I had reasons for wishing to kill the little tyrants, while they had no legitimate grudge against me. I had done nothing to them except to offer an inviting target, a butt, a punching-bag. I never expected, as

I pored over Millikan's book, that this would put me on the track of as complete a revenge as anybody could ask.

So much for boys. Girls I don't know about. I was the middle one of three brothers; my mother was a masterful character, lacking the qualities usually thought of as feminine; and I never dated a girl until I was nearly thirty. I married late, for a limited time, and had no children. It would neatly have solved my present problem if I had found how to blow up the male half of the human race while sparing the female. That is not the desire for a super-harem, either. I had enough trouble keeping one woman satisfied when I was married. It is just that the female half has never gone out of its way to make life hell for me, day after day for years, even though one or two women, too, have done me dirt. So, in a mild detached way, I should be sorry to destroy the women along with the men.

By the time I was eleven and in the sixth grade, things had got worse. My mother thought that sending me to a military academy would "make a man of me." I should be forced to exercise and mix with the boys. Drill would teach me to stand up and hold my shoulders back. And I could no longer slouch into my father's study for a quiet session with the encyclopedia.

My father was disturbed by this proposal, thinking that sending me away from home would worsen my lot by depriving me of my only sanctuary. Also he did not think we could afford a private school on his salary and small private income.

As usual, my mother won. I was glad to go at first. Anything seemed better than the torment I was enduring. Perhaps a new crowd of boys would treat me better. If they didn't, our time would be so fully organized that nobody would have an opportunity to bully me.

So in the fall of 1927, with some fears but more hopes, I entered Rogers Military Academy at Waukeegus, New Jersey . . .

The first day, things looked pretty good. I admired the gray uniforms with the little brass strip around the edge of the visors of the caps.

But it took me only a week to learn two things. One was that the school, for all its uniforms and drills, was loosely run. The boys had plenty of time to think up mischief. The other was that, by the mysterious sense boys have, they immediately picked me as fair game.

On the third day somebody pinned a sign to my back, reading CALL ME SALLY. I went around all day unconscious of the sign and puzzled by being called "Sally." "Sally" I remained all the time I was at Rogers. The reason for calling me by a girl's name was merely that I was small, skinny, and unsocial, as I have never had any tendencies towards sexual abnormality.

To this day I wince at the name "Sally." Some years ago, before I married, matchmaking friends introduced me to an attractive girl and

could not understand why I dropped her like a hot brick. Her name was Sally.

There was much hazing of new boys at Rogers; the teachers took a fatalistic attitude and looked the other way. I was the favorite hazee, only with me it did not taper off after the first few weeks. They kept it up all through the first year. One morning in March, 1928, I was awakened around five by several boys seizing my arms and legs and pinching my nose and another holding me down while one of them forced a cake of soap into my mouth.

"Look out he don't bite you," said one.

"Castor oil would be better."

"We ain't got none. Hold his nose; that'll make him open up."

"We should have shaved the soap up into little pieces. Then he'd have foamed better."

"Let me tickle him; that'll make him throw a fit."

"There, he's foaming fine, like a old geyser."

"Stop hollering, Sally," one of them addressed me, "or we'll put the suds in your eyes."

"Put the soap in 'em anyway. It'll make a red-eyed monster out of him. You know how he glares and shrieks when he gits mad?"

"Let's cut his hair all off. That'll *reely* make him look funny."

My yells brought one of the masters, who sharply ordered the tormentors to cease. They stood up while I rose to a sitting position on my bunk, spitting out soapsuds. The master said:

"What's going on here? Don't you know this is not allowed? It will mean ten rounds for each of you!"

"Rounds" were Rogers' form of discipline. Each round consisted of marching once around the track in uniform with your piece on your shoulder. (The piece was a Springfield 1903 army rifle with the firing-pin removed, lest some student get .30 cartridges to fit and blow somebody's head off.) I hoped my tormentors would be at least expelled and was outraged by the lightness of their sentence. They on the other hand were indignant that they had been so hardly treated and protested with the air of outraged virtue:

"But Mr. Wilson, sir, we was only *playing* with him!"

At that age I did not know that private schools do not throw out paying students for any but the most heinous offenses; they can't afford to. The boys walked their ten rounds and hated me for it. They regarded me as a tattle-tale because my howls had drawn Mr. Wilson's attention and devoted themselves to thinking up new and ingenious ways to make me suffer. Now they were more subtle. There was nothing so crude as forcing soap down my throat. Instead it was hiding parts of my uniform, putting horse manure and other undesirable substances in my bed, and tripping me when I was drilling so my nine-pound Springfield and I went sprawling in the dirt.

I fought often, always getting licked and usually being caught and given rounds for violating the school's rules. I was proud when I actually bloodied one boy's nose, but it did me no lasting good. He laid for me in the swimming pool and nearly drowned me. By now I was so terrorized that I did not dare to name my attackers, even when the masters revived me by artificial respiration and asked me. Wilson said:

"Ormont, we know what you're going through, but we can't give you a bodyguard to follow you around. Nor can we encourage you to tattle as a regular thing; that'll only make matters worse."

"But what can I *do*, sir? I try to obey the rules—"

"That's not it."

"What, then? I don't do anything to these kids; they just pick on me all the time."

"Well, for one thing, you could deprive them of the pleasure of seeing you yelling and making wild swings that never land—" He drummed on his desk with his fingers. "We have this sort of trouble with boys like you, and if there's any way to stop it I don't know about it. You . . . let's face it; you're *queer*."

"How?"

"Oh, your language is much too adult—"

"But isn't that what you're trying to teach us in English?"

"Sure, but that's not the point. Don't argue about it; I'm trying to help you. Then another thing. You argue about everything, and most of the time you're right. But you don't suppose people like you for putting them in the wrong, do you?"

"But people *ought*—"

"Precisely, they ought, but they don't. You can't change the world by yourself. If you had muscles like Dempsey you could get away with a good deal, but you haven't. So the best thing is to adopt a protective coloration. Pay no attention to their attacks or insults. Never argue; never complain; never criticize. Flash a glassy smile at everybody, even when you feel like murdering them. Keep your language simple and agree with what's said whether you feel that way or not. I hate to give you a counsel of hypocrisy, but I don't see any alternative. If we could only make some sort of athlete out of you—"

This was near the end of the school year. In a couple of weeks I was home. I complained about the school and asked to return to public school in New Haven. My parents objected on the ground that I was getting a better education at Rogers than I should get locally, which was true.

One day some of my old pals from public school caught me in a vacant lot and gave me a real beating, so that my face was swollen and marked. I realized that, terrible though the boys at Rogers were, they did not include the most fearful kind of all: the dimwitted muscular lout who has been left behind several grades in public school and avenges his bore-

dom and envy by tormenting his puny classmates. After that I did not complain about Rogers.

People talk of "School days, school days, dear old golden rule days—" and all that rubbish. Psychologists tell me that, while children suffer somewhat, they remember only the pleasant parts of childhood and hence idealize it later.

Both are wrong so far as I am concerned. I had a hideous childhood, and the memory of it is as sharp and painful forty years later as it was then. If I want to spoil my appetite, I have only to reminisce about my dear, dead childhood.

For one thing, I have always hated all kinds of roughhouse and horseplay, and childhood is full of them unless the child is a cripple or other shut-in. I have always had an acute sense of my own dignity and integrity, and any japery or ridicule fills me with murderous resentment. I have always hated practical jokes. When I'm asked "Can't you take a joke," the truthful answer is no, at least not in that sense. I want to kill the joker, then and for years afterwards. Such humor as I have is expressed in arch, pedantic little witticisms which amuse my academic friends but which mean nothing to most people. I might have got on better in the era of duelling. Not that I should have made much of a duellist, but I believe men were just a bit more careful then how they insulted others who might challenge them.

I set out in my second year at Rogers to try out Wilson's advice. Nobody will ever know what I went through, learning to curb my hot temper and proud, touchy spirit, and literally to turn the other cheek. All that year I sat on my inner self, a mass of boiling fury and hatred. When I was teased, mocked, ridiculed, poked, pinched, punched, hair-pulled, kicked, tripped, and so on, I pretended that nothing had happened, in the hope that the others would get tired of punching a limp bag.

It didn't always work. Once I came close to killing a teaser by hitting him over the head with one of those long window-openers with a bronze head on a wooden pole with which every classroom was equipped in the days before air-conditioned schools. Luckily I hit him with the wooden shaft and broke it, instead of with the bronze part.

As the year passed and the next began, I made myself so colorless that sometimes a whole week went by without my being baited. Of course, I heard the hated nickname "Sally" every day, but the boys often used it without malice from habit. I also endured incidents like this: Everybody, my father, the masters, and the one or two older boys who took pity on me had urged me to go in for athletics. Now, at Rogers one didn't have to join a team. One had compulsory drill and calisthenics, but beyond that things were voluntary. (It was, as I said, a loosely-run school.)

So I determined to try. One afternoon in the spring of 1929 I wan-

dered out to the athletic field, to find a group of my classmates getting up a game of baseball. I quietly joined them.

The two self-appointed captains squared off to choose their teams. One of them looked at me incredulously and asked: "Hey, Sally, are *you* in on this?"

"Yeah."

They began choosing. There were fifteen boys there, counting the captains and me. They chose until there was one boy left: me. The boy whose turn it was to choose said to the other captain:

"You can have him."

"Naw, I don't want him. You take him."

They argued while the subject of their mutual generosity squirmed and the boys already chosen grinned unsympathetically. Finally one captain said:

"Suppose we let him bat for both sides. That way, the guys the side of he's on won't be any worse off than the other."

"O.K. That suit you, Sally?"

"No, thanks," I said. "I guess I don't feel good anyway." I turned away before visible tears disgraced a thirteen-year-old.

Just after I started my third year, in the fall of 1929, the stock market fell flat. Soon my father found that his small private income had vanished as the companies in which he had invested, such as New York Central, stopped paying dividends. As a result, when I went home for Christmas, I learned that I could not go back to Rogers. Instead I should begin again with the February semester at the local high school.

In New Haven my 'possum-tactics were put to a harder test. Many boys in my class had known me in former days and were delighted to take up where they had left off. For instance—

For decades, boys who found study-hall dull have enlivened the proceedings with rubber bands and bits of paper folded into a V-shape for missiles. The trick is to keep your missile-weapon palmed until the teacher is looking elsewhere, and then to bounce your wad off the neck of some fellow-student in front of you. Perhaps this was tame compared to nowadays, when, I understand, the students shoot ball-bearings and knock the teacher's teeth and eyes out, and carve him with switch-blade knives if he objects. All this happened before the followers of Dewey and Watson, with their lunacies about "permissive" training, had made classrooms into a semblance of the traditional cannibal feast with teacher playing the rôle of the edible missionary.

Right behind me sat a small boy named Patrick Hanrahan: a wiry, red-haired young hellion with a South Boston accent. He used to hit me with paper wads from time to time. I paid no attention because I knew he could lick me with ease. I was a head taller than he, but though I had begun to shoot up I was as skinny, weak, and clumsy as ever. If anything I was clumsier, so that I could hardly get through a meal without knocking over a glass.

One day I had been peppered with unusual persistence. My self-control slipped, as it would under a determined enough assault. I got out my own rubber band and paper missiles. I knew Hanrahan had shot at me before, but, of course, one never saw the boy who shot a given wad at you.

When a particularly hard-driven one stung me behind the ear, I whipped around and let Hanrahan have one in the face. It struck just below his left eye, hard enough to make a red spot. He looked astonished, then furious, and savagely whispered:

"What you do that for?"

"You shot me," I whispered back.

"I did not! I'll git you for this! You meet me after class."

"You did, too—" I began, when the teacher barked: "Ormont!" I shut up.

Perhaps Hanrahan really had not shot that last missile. One could argue that it was not more than his due for the earlier ones he *had* shot. But that is not how boys' minds work. They reason like the speaker of Voltaire's lines:

"Cet animal est très méchant;
Quand on l'attaque, il se défend!"

I knew if I met Hanrahan on the way out I should get a fearful beating. When I saw him standing on the marble steps that led up from the floor of the study-hall to the main exit, I walked quietly out the rear door.

I was on my way to the gym when I got a kick in the behind. There was Paddy Hanrahan, saying: "Come on, you yellow dog, fight!"

"Hello there," I said with a sickly grin.

He slapped my face.

"Having fun?" I said.

He kicked me in the leg.

"Keep right on," I said, "I don't mind."

He slapped and kicked me again, crying: "Yellow dog! Yellow dog!" I walked on toward the gymnasium as if nothing were happening, saying to myself: pay no attention, never criticize or complain, keep quiet, ignore it, pay no attention— At last Paddy had to stop hitting and kicking me to go to his own next class.

Next day I had a few bruises where Hanrahan had struck me—nothing serious. When he passed me he snarled: "Yellow dog!" but did not renew his assault. I have wasted much time in the forty years since then, imagining revenges on Paddy Hanrahan. Hanrahan coming into my office in rags and pleading for a job, and my having him thrown out— All that nonsense. I never saw him again after I finished school in New Haven.

There were a few more such incidents during that year and the following one. For instance at the first class-meeting in the autumn of 1930, when the student officers of my class were elected for the semester, after several adolescents had been nominated for president, somebody piped up: "I nominate Wade Ormont!"

The whole class burst into a roar of laughter. One of the teachers pounced on the nominator and hustled him out for disturbing an orderly session by making frivolous nominations. Not knowing how to decline a nomination, I could do nothing but stare stonily ahead as if I hadn't heard. I need not have worried; the teachers never even wrote my name on the blackboard with those of the other nominees, nor did they ask for seconds. They just ignored the whole thing, as if the nominator had named Julius Caesar.

Then I graduated. As my marks put me in the top one percentile in scientific subjects and pretty high in the others, I got a scholarship at M. I. T. Without it I don't think my father could have afforded to send me.

When I entered M. I. T., I had developed my protective shell to a good degree of effectiveness, though not so perfectly as later: the automatic, insincere, glassy smile turned on as by a switch; the glad hand; the subdued, modest manner that never takes any initiative or advances an opinion unless it agrees with somebody else's. And I never, *never* showed emotion no matter what. How could I, when the one emotion inside me, overwhelming all others, was a blazing homicidal fury and hatred, stored up from all those years of torment? If I really let myself go I should kill somebody. The incident with the window-opener had scared me. Much better never to show what you're thinking. As for feeling, it is better not to feel—to view the world with the detachment of a visitor at the zoo.

M. I. T. was good to me: it gave me a sound scientific education without pulverizing my soul in a mortar every day. For one thing, many other undergraduates were of my own introverted type. For another, we were kept too busy grinding away at heavy schedules to have time or energy for horseplay. For another, athletics did not bulk large in our program, so my own physical inferiority did not show up so glaringly. I reached medium height—about five-eight—but remained thin, weak, and awkward. Except for a slight middle-aged bulge around the middle, I am that way yet.

For thousands of years, priests and philosophers have told us to love mankind without giving any sound reason for loving the creatures. The mass of them are a lot of cruel, treacherous, hairless apes. They hate us intellectuals, longhairs, highbrows, eggheads, or double-domes, despite—or perhaps because—without us they would still be running naked in the wilderness and turning over flat stones for their meals. Love them? Hah!

Oh, I admit I have known a few of my own kind who were friendly. But by the time I had learned to suppress all emotion to avoid baiting, I was no longer the sort of man to whom many feel friendly. A bright enough physicist, well-mannered and seemingly poised, but impersonal and aloof, hardly seeing my fellow-men except as creatures whom I had to manipulate in order to live. I have heard my colleagues describe others of my type as a "dry stick" or "cold fish," so no doubt they say

the same of me. But who made me that way? I might not have become a fascinating *bon-vivant* even if I had not been bullied, but I should probably not have become such an extreme aberrant. I might even have been able to like individuals and to show normal emotions.

The rest of my story is routine. I graduated from M. I. T. in 1936, took my Ph.D. from Chicago in 1939, got an instructorship at Chicago, and next year was scooped up by the Manhattan Engineer District. I spent the first part of the war at the Argonne Labs and the last part at Los Alamos. More by good luck than good management, I never came in contact with the Communists during the bright pink era of 1933–45. If I had, I might easily, with my underdog complex and my store of resentment, have been swept into their net. After the war I worked under Lawrence at Berkeley—

I've had a succession of such jobs. They think I'm a sound man, perhaps not a great creative genius like Fermi or Teller, but a bear for spotting errors and judging the likeliest line of research to follow. It's all part of the objective, judicious side of my nature that I have long cultivated. I haven't tried to get into administrative work, which you have to do to rise to the top in bureaucratic setups like this. I hate to deal with people as individuals. I could probably do it—I have forced myself to do many things—but what would be the purpose? I have no desire for power over my fellows. I make enough to live on comfortably, especially since my wife left me—

Oh, yes, my wife. I had got my Ph.D. before I had my first date. I dated girls occasionally for the next decade, but in my usual reserved, formal manner.

Why did I leave Berkeley to go to Columbia University, for instance? I had a hobby of noting down people's conversation in shorthand when they weren't noticing. I was collecting this conversation for a statistical analysis of speech: the frequency of sounds, of words, combinations of words, parts of speech, topics of conversation, and so on. It was a purely intellectual hobby with no gainful objective, though I might have written up my results for one of the learned periodicals. One day my secretary noticed what I was doing and asked me about it. In an incautious moment I explained. She looked at me blankly, then burst into laughter and said:

"My goodness, Dr. Ormont, you *are* a nut!"

She never knew how close she came to having her skull bashed in with the inkwell. For a few seconds I sat there, gripping my pad and pencil and pressing my lips together. Then I put the paper quietly away and returned to my physics. I never resumed the statistical study, and I hated that secretary. I hated her particularly because I had had my own doubts about my mental health and so could not bear to be called a nut even in fun. I closed my shell more tightly than ever.

But I could not go on working next to that secretary. I could have

framed her on some manufactured complaint, or just told the big boss I didn't like her and wanted another. But I refused to do this. I was the objective, impersonal man. I would never let an emotion make me unjust, and even asking to have her transferred would put a little black mark on her record. The only thing was for *me* to go away. So I got in touch with Columbia—

There I found a superior job with a superior secretary: Georgia Ehrenfels, so superior in fact that in 1958 we were married. I was already in my forties. She was twelve years younger and had been married and divorced once.

I think it took her about six months to realize that she had made an even bigger mistake than the first time. I never realized it at all. My mind was on my physics, and a wife was a nice convenience but nobody to open up one's shell for. Later, when I finally realized that things had begun to go bad, I tried to open my shell and found that the hinges were stuck.

My wife tried to make me over, but that is not easy with a middle-aged man even under the most favorable conditions. She pestered me to get a house in the country until I gave in. I had never owned a house and proved an inefficient householder. I hated the tinkering, gardening, and other minutiae of suburban life. Georgia did most of the work. Then one day later I came home from work to find her gone and a note beginning:

> Dear Wade:
>
> It is no use. It is not your fault. You are as you are, as I should have realized at the beginning. Perhaps I am foolish not to appreciate your many virtues and to insist on that human warmth you do not have—

Well, she got her divorce and married another academic man. I don't know how they have got on, but the last I heard they were still married. Psychologists say people tend to repeat their marital mistakes rather than to learn from them. I resolved not to repeat mine by the simple expedient of having nothing more to do with women. So far I have kept to it.

This breakup did disturb me for a time, more than Iron Man Ormont would care to admit. I drank heavily, which I had never done. I began to make mistakes in my work. Finally I went to a psychiatrist. They might be one-third quackery and one-third unprovable speculation, but to whom else could one turn?

The psychiatrist was a nice little man, stout and square-built, with a subdued manner—a rather negative, colorless personality. I was surprised, for I had expected something with a pointed beard, Viennese gestures, and aggressive garrulity. Instead he quietly drew me out. After a few months he told me:

"You're not the least psychotic, Wade. You do have what we call a

schizoidal personality. Such people always have a hard time in personal relations. Now, you have found a solution for your problem in your pose of good-natured indifference. The trouble is that the pose has been practiced so long that it's become the real Dr. Ormont, and it has raised up its own difficulties. You practiced so long and so hard suppressing your emotions that now you can't let them go when you want to—"

There was more of the same, much of which I had already figured out for myself. That part was fine; no disagreement. But what to do about it? I learned that the chances of improvement by psychoanalytical or similar treatment go down rapidly after the age of thirty, and over forty it is so small as hardly to be worth bothering with. After a year of spending the psychiatrist's time and my money, we gave up.

I had kept my house all this time. I had in fact adapted myself intelligently to living in a house, and I had accumulated such masses of scientific books, magazines, pamphlets, and other printed matter that I could no longer have got into an ordinary apartment. I had a maid, old and ugly and I spent my time, away from the office, alone in my house. I learned to plant the lot with ground-cover that required no mowing and to hire a gardener a few times a year so as not to outrage the neighbors too much.

Then I got a better job here. I sold my house on Long Island and bought another here, which I have run in the same style as the last one. I let the neighbors strictly alone. If they had done likewise I might have had an easier time deciding what to do with my discovery. As it is, many suburbanites seem to think that if a man lives alone and doesn't wish to be bothered, he must be some sort of ogre.

If I write up the chain-reaction, the news will probably get out. No amount of security-regulations will stop people from talking about the impending end of the world. Once having done so, the knowledge will probably cause the blowing-up of the earth—not right away, but in a decade or two. I shall probably not live to see it, but it wouldn't displease me if it did go off in my lifetime. It would not deprive me of much.

I'm fifty-three and look older. My doctor tells me I'm not in good shape. My heart is not good; my blood pressure is too high; I sleep badly and have headaches. The doctor tells me to cut down on coffee, to stop this and stop that. But even if I do, he can't assure me a full decade more. There is nothing simple wrong with me that an operation would help; just a poor weak body further abused by too intensive mental work over most of my life.

The thought of dying does not much affect me. I have never got much fun out of life, and such pleasures as there are have turned sour in recent years. I find myself getting more and more indifferent to everything but physics, and even that is becoming a bore.

The one genuine emotion I have left is hatred. I hate mankind in general in a mild, moderate way. I hate the male half of mankind more

intensely, and the class of boys most bitterly of all. I should love to see the severed heads of all the boys in the world stuck on spikes.

Of course I am objective enough to know why I feel this way. But knowing the reason for the feeling doesn't change the feeling, at least not in a hardened old character like me.

I also know that to wipe out all mankind would not be just. It would kill millions who have never harmed me, or for that matter harmed anybody else.

But why should I be just? When have these glabrous primates been just to me? The head-shrinker tried to tell me to let my emotions go, and then perhaps I could learn to be happy. Well, I have just one real emotion. If I let it go, that's the end of the world.

On the other hand, I should destroy not only all the billions of bullies and sadists, but the few victims like myself. I have sympathized with the downtrodden because I knew how they felt. If there were some way to save them while destroying the rest— But my sympathy is probably wasted; most of the downtrodden would persecute others, too, if they had the power.

I had thought about the matter for several days without a decision. Then came Mischief Night. This is the night before Hallowe'en, when the local kids raise hell. The following night they go out again to beg candy and cookies from the people whose windows they have soaped and whose garbage-pails they have upset.

All the boys in my neighborhood hate me. I don't know why. It's one of those things like a dog's sensing the dislike of another dog. Though I don't scream or snarl at them and chase them, they somehow know I hate them even when I have nothing to do with them.

I was so buried in my problem that I forgot about Mischief Night, and as usual stopped in town for dinner at a restaurant before taking the train out to my suburb. When I got home, I found that in the hour of darkness before my arrival, the boys had given my place the full treatment. The soaped windows and the scattered garbage and the toilet-paper spread around were bad but endurable. However, they had also burgled my garage and gone over my little British two-seater. The tires were punctured, the upholstery slashed, the paint scratched, and the wiring ripped out of the engine. There were other damages like uprooted shrubbery—

To make sure I knew what they thought, they had lettered a lot of shirt-cardboards and left them around, reading: OLD LADY ORMONT IS A NUT! BEWARE THE MAD SCIENTIST!

That decided me. There is one way I can be happy during my remaining years, and that is by the knowledge that all these bullies will get theirs some day. I hate them. I hate them. I hate everybody. I want to kill mankind. I'd kill them by slow torture if I could. If I can't, blowing up the earth will do. I shall write my report.

THE GAME OF RAT AND DRAGON

by Cordwainer Smith

Pinlighting is a hell of a way to earn a living. Underhill was furious as he closed the door behind himself. It didn't make much sense to wear a uniform and look like a soldier if people didn't appreciate what you did.

He sat down in his chair, laid his head back in the headrest and pulled the helmet down over his forehead.

As he waited for the pin-set to warm up, he remembered the girl in the outer corridor. She had looked at it, then looked at him scornfully.

"Meow." That was all she had said. Yet it had cut him like a knife.

What did she think he was—a fool, a loafer, a uniformed nonentity? Didn't she know that for every half hour of pinlighting, he got a minimum of two months' recuperation in the hospital?

By now the set was warm. He felt the squares of space around him, sensed himself at the middle of an immense grid, a cubic grid, full of nothing. Out in that nothingness, he could sense the hollow aching horror of space itself and could feel the terrible anxiety which his mind encountered whenever it met the faintest trace of inert dust.

As he relaxed, the comforting solidity of the Sun, the clockwork of the familiar planets and the Moon rang in on him. Our own solar system was as charming and as simple as an ancient cuckoo clock filled with familiar ticking and with reassuring noises. The odd little moons of Mars swung around their planet like frantic mice, yet their regularity was itself

an assurance that all was well. Far above the plane of the ecliptic, he could feel half a ton of dust more or less drifting outside the lanes of human travel.

Here there was nothing to fight, nothing to challenge the mind, to tear the living soul out of a body with its roots dripping in effluvium as tangible as blood.

Nothing ever moved in on the Solar System. He could wear the pin-set forever and be nothing more than a sort of telepathic astronomer, a man who could feel the hot, warm protection of the Sun throbbing and burning against his living mind.

Woodley came in.

"Same old ticking world," said Underhill. "Nothing to report. No wonder they didn't develop the pin-set until they began to planoform. Down here with the hot Sun around us, it feels so good and so quiet. You can feel everything spinning and turning. It's nice and sharp and compact. It's sort of like sitting around home."

Woodley grunted. He was not much given to flights of fantasy.

Undeterred, Underhill went on, "It must have been pretty good to have been an Ancient Man. I wonder why they burned up their world with war. They didn't have to planoform. They didn't have to go out to earn their livings among the stars. They didn't have to dodge the Rats or play the Game. They couldn't have invented pinlighting because they didn't have any need of it, did they, Woodley?"

Woodley grunted, "Uh-huh." Woodley was twenty-six years old and due to retire in one more year. He already had a farm picked out. He had gotten through ten years of hard work pinlighting with the best of them. He had kept his sanity by not thinking very much about his job, meeting the strains of the task whenever he had to meet them and thinking nothing more about his duties until the next emergency arose.

Woodley never made a point of getting popular among the Partners. None of the Partners liked him very much. Some of them even resented him. He was suspected of thinking ugly thoughts of the Partners on occasion, but since none of the Partners ever thought a complaint in articulate form, the other pinlighters and the Chiefs of the Instrumentality left him alone.

Underhill was still full of the wonder of their job. Happily he babbled on, "What does happen to us when we planoform? Do you think it's sort of like dying? Did you ever see anybody who had his soul pulled out?"

"Pulling souls is just a way of talking about it," said Woodley. "After all these years, nobody knows whether we have souls or not."

"But I saw one once. I saw what Dogwood looked like when he came apart. There was something funny. It looked wet and sort of sticky as if it were bleeding and it went out of him—and you know what they did to Dogwood? They took him away, up in that part of the hospital where

you and I never go—way up at the top part where the others are, where the others always have to go if they are alive after the Rats of the Up-and-Out have gotten them."

Woodley sat down and lit an ancient pipe. He was burning something called tobacco in it. It was a dirty sort of habit, but it made him look very dashing and adventurous.

"Look here, youngster. You don't have to worry about that stuff. Pinlighting is getting better all the time. The Partners are getting better. I've seen them pinlight two Rats forty-six million miles apart in one and a half milliseconds. As long as people had to try to work the pin-sets themselves, there was always the chance that with a minimum of four hundred milliseconds for the human mind to set a pinlight, we wouldn't light the Rats up fast enough to protect our planoforming ships. The Partners have changed all that. Once they get going, they're faster than Rats. And they always will be. I know it's not easy, letting a Partner share you mind—"

"It's not easy for them, either," said Underhill.

"Don't worry about them. They're not human. Let them take care of themselves. I've seen more pinlighters go crazy from monkeying around with Partners than I have ever seen caught by the Rats. How many do you actually know of them that got grabbed by Rats?"

Underhill looked down at his fingers, which shone green and purple in the vivid light thrown by the tuned-in pin-set, and counted ships. The thumb for the *Andromeda*, lost with crew and passengers, the index finger and the middle finger for *Release Ships* 43 and 56, found with their pin-sets burned out and every man, woman, and child on board dead or insane. The ring finger, the little finger, and the thumb of the other hand were the first three battleships to be lost to the Rats—lost as people realized that there was something out there *underneath space itself* which was alive, capricious and malevolent.

Planoforming was sort of funny. It felt like—

Like nothing much.

Like the twinge of a mild electric shock.

Like the ache of a sore tooth bitten on for the first time.

Like a slightly painful flash of light against the eyes.

Yet in that time, a forty-thousand-ton ship lifting free above Earth disappeared somehow or other into two dimensions and appeared half a light-year or fifty light-years off.

At one moment, he would be sitting in the Fighting Room, the pin-set ready and the familiar Solar System ticking around inside his head. For a second or a year (he could never tell how long it really was, subjectively), the funny little flash went through him and then he was loose in the Up-and-Out, the terrible open spaces between the stars, where the stars themselves felt like pimples on his telepathic mind and the planets were too far away to be sensed or read.

Somewhere in this outer space, a gruesome death awaited, death and horror of a kind which Man had never encountered until he reached out for interstellar space itself. Apparently the light of the suns kept the Dragons away.

Dragons. That was what people called them. To ordinary people, there was nothing, nothing except the shiver of planoforming and the hammer blow of sudden death or the dark spastic note of lunacy descending into their minds.

But to the telepaths, they were Dragons.

In the fraction of a second between the telepaths' awareness of a hostile something out in the black, hollow nothingness of space and the impact of a ferocious, ruinous psychic blow against all living things within the ship, the telepaths had sensed entities something like the Dragons of ancient human lore, beasts more clever than beasts, demons more tangible than demons, hungry vortices of aliveness and hate compounded by unknown means out of the thin tenuous matter between the stars.

It took a surviving ship to bring back the news—a ship in which, by sheer chance, a telepath had a light beam ready, turning it out at the innocent dust so that, within the panorama of his mind, the Dragon dissolved into nothing at all and the other passengers, themselves non-telepathic, went about their way not realizing that their own immediate deaths had been averted.

From then on, it was easy—almost.

Planoforming ships always carried telepaths. Telepaths had their sensitiveness enlarged to an immense range by the pin-sets, which were telepathic amplifiers adapted to the mammal mind. The pin-sets in turn were electronically geared into small dirigible light bombs. Light did it.

Light broke up the Dragons, allowed the ships to reform three-dimensionally, skip, skip, skip, as they moved from star to star.

The odds suddenly moved down from a hundred to one against mankind to sixty to forty in mankind's favor.

This was not enough. The telepaths were trained to become ultrasensitive, trained to become aware of the Dragons in less than a millisecond.

But it was found that the Dragons could move a million miles in just under two milliseconds and that this was not enough for the human mind to activate the light beams.

Attempts had been made to sheath the ships in light at all times. This defense wore out.

As mankind learned about the Dragons, so too, apparently, the Dragons learned about mankind. Somehow they flattened their own bulk and came in on extremely flat trajectories very quickly.

Intense light was needed, light of sunlike intensity. This could be provided only by light bombs. Pinlighting came into existence.

Pinlighting consisted of the detonation of ultra-vivid miniature photo-

nuclear bombs, which converted a few ounces of a magnesium isotope into pure visible radiance.

The odds kept coming down in mankind's favor, yet ships were being lost.

It became so bad that people didn't even want to find the ships because the rescuers knew what they would see. It was sad to bring back to Earth three hundred bodies ready for burial and two hundred or three hundred lunatics, damaged beyond repair, to be wakened, and fed, and cleaned, and put to sleep, wakened and fed again until their lives were ended.

Telepaths tried to reach into the minds of the psychotics who had been damaged by the Dragons, but they found nothing there beyond vivid spouting columns of fiery terror bursting from the primordial id itself, the volcanic source of life.

Then came the Partners.

Man and Partner could do together what Man could not do alone. Men had the intellect. Partners had the speed.

The Partners rode their tiny craft, no larger than footballs, outside the spaceships. They planoformed with the ships. They rode beside them in their six-pound craft ready to attack.

The tiny ships of the Partners were swift. Each carried a dozen pinlights, bombs no bigger than thimbles.

The pinlighters threw the Partners—quite literally threw—by means of mind-to-firing relays direct at the Dragons.

What seemed to be Dragons to the human mind appeared in the form of gigantic Rats in the minds of the Partners.

Out in the pitiless nothingness of space, the Partners' minds responded to an instinct as old as life. The Partners attacked, striking with a speed faster than Man's, going from attack to attack until the Rats or themselves were destroyed. Almost all the time, it was the Partners who won.

With the safety of the interstellar skip, skip, skip of the ships, commerce increased immensely, the population of all the colonies went up, and the demand for trained Partners increased.

Underhill and Woodley were a part of the third generation of pinlighters and yet, to them, it seemed as though their craft had endured forever.

Gearing space into minds by means of the pin-set, adding the Partners to those minds, keying up the mind for the tension of a fight on which all depended—this was more than human synapses could stand for long. Underhill needed his two months' rest after half an hour of fighting. Woodley needed his retirement after ten years of service. They were young. They were good. But they had limitations.

So much depended on the choice of Partners, so much on the sheer luck of who drew whom.

Father Moontree and the little girl named West entered the room.

They were the other two pinlighters. The human complement of the Fighting Room was now complete.

Father Moontree was a red-faced man of forty-five who had lived the peaceful life of a farmer until he reached his fortieth year. Only then, belatedly, did the authorities find he was telepathic and agree to let him late in life enter upon the career of pinlighter. He did well at it, but he was fantastically old for this kind of business.

Father Moontree looked at the glum Woodley and the musing Underhill. "How're the youngsters today? Ready for a good fight?"

"Father always wants a fight," giggled the little girl named West. She was such a little little girl. Her giggle was high and childish. She looked like the last person in the world one would expect to find in the rough, sharp dueling of pinlighting.

Underhill had been amused one time when he found one of the most sluggish of the Partners coming away happy from contact with the mind of the girl named West.

Usually the Partners didn't care much about the human minds with which they were paired for the journey. The Partners seemed to take the attitude that human minds were complex and fouled up beyond belief, anyhow. No Partner ever questioned the superiority of the human mind, though very few of the Partners were much impressed by that superiority.

The Partners liked people. They were willing to fight with them. They were even willing to die for them. But when a Partner liked an individual the way, for example, that Captain Wow or the Lady May liked Underhill, the liking had nothing to do with intellect. It was a matter of temperament, of feel.

Underhill knew perfectly well that Captain Wow regarded his, Underhill's, brains as silly. What Captain Wow liked was Underhill's friendly emotional structure, the cheerfulness and glint of wicked amusement that shot through Underhill's unconscious thought patterns, and the gaiety with which Underhill faced danger. The words, the history books, the ideas, the science—Underhill could sense all that in his own mind, reflected back from Captain Wow's mind, as so much rubbish.

Miss West looked at Underhill. "I bet you've put stickum on the stones."

"I did not!"

Underhill felt his ears grow red with embarrassment. During his novitiate, he had tried to cheat in the lottery because he got particularly fond of a special Partner, a lovely young mother named Murr. It was so much easier to operate with Murr and she was so affectionate toward him that he forgot pinlighting was hard work and that he was not instructed to have a good time with his Partner. They were both designed and prepared to go into deadly battle together.

One cheating had been enough. They had found him out and he had been laughed at for years.

Father Moontree picked up the imitation-leather cup and shook the stone dice which assigned them their Partners for the trip. By senior rights, he took first draw.

He grimaced. He had drawn a greedy old character, a tough old male whose mind was full of slobbering thoughts of food, veritable oceans full of half-spoiled fish. Father Moontree had once said that he burped cod liver oil for weeks after drawing that particular glutton, so strongly had the telepathic image of fish impressed itself upon his mind. Yet the glutton was a glutton for danger as well as for fish. He had killed sixty-three Dragons, more than any other Partner in the service, and was quite literally worth his weight in gold.

The little girl West came next. She drew Captain Wow. When she saw who it was, she smiled.

"I *like* him," she said. "He's such fun to fight with. He feels so nice and cuddly in my mind."

"Cuddly, hell," said Woodley. "I've been in his mind, too. It's the most leering mind in this ship, bar none."

"Nasty man," said the little girl. She said it declaratively, without reproach.

Underhill, looking at her, shivered.

He didn't see how she could take Captain Wow so calmly. Captain Wow's mind *did* leer. When Captain Wow got excited in the middle of a battle, confused images of Dragons, deadly Rats, luscious beds, the smell of fish, and the shock of space all scrambled together in his mind as he and Captain Wow, their consciousnesses linked together through the pin-set, became a fantastic composite of human being and Persian cat.

That's the trouble with working with cats, thought Underhill. It's a pity that nothing else anywhere will serve as Partner. Cats were all right once you got in touch with them telepathically. They were smart enough to meet the needs of the fight, but their motives and desires were certainly different from those of humans.

They were companionable enough as long as you thought tangible images at them, but their minds just closed up and went to sleep when you recited Shakespeare or Colegrove, or if you tried to tell them what space was.

It was sort of funny realizing that the Partners who were so grim and mature out here in space were the same cute little animals that people had used as pets for thousands of years back on Earth. He had embarrassed himself more than once while on the ground saluting perfectly ordinary non-telepathic cats because he had forgotten for the moment that they were not Partners.

He picked up the cup and shook out his stone dice.

He was lucky—he drew the Lady May.

The Lady May was the most thoughtful Partner he had ever met. In her, the finely bred pedigree mind of a Persian cat had reached one of its

highest peaks of development. She was more complex than any human woman, but the complexity was all one of emotions, memory, hope and discriminated experience—experience sorted through without benefit of words.

When he had first come into contact with her mind, he was astonished at its clarity. With her he remembered her kittenhood. He remembered every mating experience she had ever had. He saw in a half-recognizable gallery all the other pinlighters with whom she had been paired for the fight. And he saw himself radiant, cheerful and desirable.

He even thought he caught the edge of a longing—

A very flattering and yearning thought: *What a pity he is not a cat.*

Woodley picked up the last stone. He drew what he deserved—a sullen, scared old tomcat with none of the verve of Captain Wow. Woodley's Partner was the most animal of all the cats on the ship, a low, brutish type with a dull mind. Even telepathy had not refined his character. His ears were half chewed off from the first fights in which he had engaged.

He was a serviceable fighter, nothing more.

Woodley grunted.

Underhill glanced at him oddly. Didn't Woodley ever do anything but grunt?

Father Moontree looked at the other three. "You might as well get your Partners now. I'll let the Scanner know we're ready to go into the Up-and-Out."

Underhill spun the combination lock on the Lady May's cage. He woke her gently and took her into his arms. She humped her back luxuriously, stretched her claws, started to purr, thought better of it, and licked him on the wrist instead. He did not have the pin-set on, so their minds were closed to each other, but in the angle of her mustache and in the movement of her ears, he caught some sense of gratification she experienced in finding him as her Partner.

He talked to her in human speech, even though speech meant nothing to a cat when the pin-set was not on.

"It's a damn shame, sending a sweet little thing like you whirling around in the coldness of nothing to hunt for Rats that are bigger and deadlier than all of us put together. You didn't ask for this kind of fight, did you?"

For answer, she licked his hand, purred, tickled his cheek with her long fluffy tail, turned around and faced him, golden eyes shining.

For a moment, they stared at each other, man squatting, cat standing erect on her hind legs, front claws digging into his knee. Human eyes and cat eyes looked across an immensity which no words could meet, but which affection spanned in a single glance.

"Time to get in," he said.

She walked docilely into her spheroid carrier. She climbed in. He saw to it that her miniature pin-set rested firmly and comfortably against the

base of her brain. He made sure that her claws were padded so that she could not tear herself in the excitement of battle.

Softly he said to her, "Ready?"

For answer, she preened her back as much as her harness would permit and purred softly within the confines of the frame that held her.

He slapped down the lid and watched the sealant ooze around the seam. For a few hours, she was welded into her projectile until a workman with a short cutting arc would remove her after she had done her duty.

He picked up the entire projectile and slipped it into the ejection tube. He closed the door of the tube, spun the lock, seated himself in his chair, and put his own pin-set on.

Once again he flung the switch.

He sat in a small room, *small, small, warm, warm,* the bodies of the other three people moving close around him, the tangible lights in the ceiling bright and heavy against his closed eyelids.

As the pin-set warmed, the room fell away. The other people ceased to be people and became small glowing heaps of fire, embers, dark red fire, with the consciousness of life burning like old red coals in a country fireplace.

As the pin-set warmed a little more, he felt Earth just below him, felt the ship slipping away, felt the turning Moon as it swung on the far side of the world, felt the planets and the hot, clear goodness of the Sun which kept the Dragons so far from mankind's native ground.

Finally, he reached complete awareness.

He was telepathically alive to a range of millions of miles. He felt the dust which he had noticed earlier high above the ecliptic. With a thrill of warmth and tenderness, he felt the consciousness of the Lady May pouring over into his own. Her consciousness was as gentle and clear and yet sharp to the taste of his mind as if it were scented oil. It felt relaxing and reassuring. He could sense her welcome of him. It was scarcely a thought, just a raw emotion of greeting.

At last they were one again.

In a tiny remote corner of his mind, as tiny as the smallest toy he had ever seen in his childhood, he was still aware of the room and the ship, and of Father Moontree picking up a telephone and speaking to a Scanner captain in charge of the ship.

His telepathic mind caught the idea long before his ears could frame the words. The actual sound followed the idea the way that thunder on an ocean beach follows the lightning inward from far out over the seas.

"The Fighting Room is ready. Clear to planoform, sir."

Underhill was always a little exasperated the way that Lady May experienced things before he did.

He was braced for the quick vinegar thrill of planoforming, but he caught her report of it before his own nerves could register what happened.

Earth had fallen so far away that he groped for several milliseconds before he found the Sun in the upper rear right-hand corner of his telepathic mind.

That was a good jump, he thought. This way we'll get there in four or five skips.

A few hundred miles outside the ship, the Lady May thought back at him, "O warm, O generous, O gigantic man! O brave, O friendly, O tender and huge Partner! O wonderful with you, with you so good, good, good, warm, warm, now to fight, now to go, good with you . . ."

He knew that she was not thinking words, that his mind took the clear amiable babble of her cat intellect and translated it into images which his own thinking could record and understand.

Neither one of them was absorbed in the game of mutual greetings. He reached out far beyond her range of perception to see if there was anything near the ship. It was funny how it was possible to do two things at once. He could scan space with his pin-set mind and yet at the same time catch a vagrant thought of hers, a lovely, affectionate thought about a son who had had a golden face and a chest covered with soft, incredibly downy white fur.

While he was still searching, he caught the warning from her.

We jump again!

And so they had. The ship had moved to a second planoform. The stars were different. The Sun was immeasurably far behind. Even the nearest stars were barely in contact. This was good Dragon country, this open, nasty, hollow kind of space. He reached farther, faster, sensing and looking for danger, ready to fling the Lady May at danger wherever he found it.

Terror blazed up in his mind, so sharp, so clear, that it came through as a physical wrench.

The little girl named West had found something—something immense, long, black, sharp, greedy, horrific. She flung Captain Wow at it.

Underhill tried to keep his own mind clear. "Watch out!" he shouted telepathically at the others, trying to move the Lady May around.

At one corner of the battle, he felt the lustful rage of Captain Wow as the big Persian tomcat detonated lights while he approached the streak of dust which threatened the ship and the people within.

The lights scored near-misses.

The dust flattened itself, changing from the shape of a sting-ray into the shape of a spear.

Not three milliseconds had elapsed.

Father Moontree was talking human words and was saying in a voice that moved like cold molasses out of a heavy jar, "C-A-P-T-A-I-N." Underhill knew that the sentence was going to be "Captain, move fast!"

The battle would be fought and finished before Father Moontree got through talking.

Now, fractions of a millisecond later, the Lady May was directly in line.

Here was where the skill and speed of the Partners came in. She could react faster than he. She could see the threat as an immense Rat coming direct at her.

She could fire the light bombs with a discrimination which he might miss.

He was connected with her mind, but he could not follow it.

His consciousness absorbed the tearing wound inflicted by the alien enemy. It was like no wound on Earth—raw, crazy pain which started like a burn at his navel. He began to writhe in his chair.

Actually he had not yet had time to move a muscle when the Lady May struck back at their enemy.

Five evenly spaced photonuclear bombs blazed out across a hundred thousand miles.

The pain in his mind and body vanished.

He felt a moment of fierce, terrible, feral elation running through the mind of the Lady May as she finished her kill. It was always disappointing to the cats to find out that their enemies whom they sensed as gigantic space Rats disappeared at the moment of destruction.

Then he felt her hurt, the pain and the fear that swept over both of them as the battle, quicker than the movement of an eyelid, had come and gone. In the same instant, there came the sharp and acid twinge of planoform.

Once more the ship went skip.

He could hear Woodley thinking at him. "You don't have to bother much. This old son of a gun and I will take over for a while."

Twice again the twinge, the skip.

He had no idea where he was until the lights of the Caledonia space board shone below.

With a weariness that lay almost beyond the limits of thought, he threw his mind back into rapport with the pin-set, fixing the Lady May's projectile gently and neatly in its launching tube.

She was half dead with fatigue, but he could feel the beat of her heart, could listen to her panting, and he grasped the grateful edge of a thanks reaching from her mind to his.

They put him in the hospital at Caledonia.

The doctor was friendly but firm. "You actually got touched by that Dragon. That's as close a shave as I've ever seen. It's all so quick that it'll be a long time before we know what happened scientifically, but I suppose you'd be ready for the insane asylum now if the contact had lasted several tenths of a millisecond longer. What kind of cat did you have out in front of you?"

Underhill felt the words coming out of him slowly. Words were such a lot of trouble compared with the speed and the joy of thinking, fast and sharp and clear, mind to mind! But words were all that could reach ordinary people like this doctor.

His mouth moved heavily as he articulated words, "Don't call our Part-

ners cats. The right thing to call them is Partners. They fight for us in a team. You ought to know we call them Partners, not cats. How is mine?"

"I don't know," said the doctor contritely. "We'll find out for you. Meanwhile, old man, you take it easy. There's nothing but rest that can help you. Can you make yourself sleep, or would you like us to give you some kind of sedative?"

"I can sleep," said Underhill. "I just want to know about the Lady May."

The nurse joined in. She was a little antagonistic. "Don't you want to know about the other people?"

"They're okay," said Underhill. "I knew that before I came in here."

He stretched his arms and sighed and grinned at them. He could see they were relaxing and were beginning to treat him as a person instead of a patient.

"I'm all right," he said. "Just let me know when I can go see my Partner."

A new thought struck him. He looked wildly at the doctor. "They didn't send her off with the ship, did they?"

"I'll find out right away," said the doctor. He gave Underhill a reassuring squeeze of the shoulder and left the room.

The nurse took a napkin off a goblet of chilled fruit juice.

Underhill tried to smile at her. There seemed to be something wrong with the girl. He wished she would go away. First she had started to be friendly and now she was distant again. It's a nuisance being telepathic, he thought. You keep trying to reach even when you are not making contact.

Suddenly she swung around on him.

"You pinlighters! You and your damn cats!"

Just as she stamped out, he burst into her mind. He saw himself a radiant hero, clad in his smooth suede uniform, the pin-set crown shining like ancient royal jewels around his head. He saw his own face, handsome and masculine, shining out of her mind. He saw himself very far away and he saw himself as she hated him.

She hated him in the secrecy of her own mind. She hated him because he was—she thought—proud, and strange, and rich, better and more beautiful than people like her.

He cut off the sight of her mind and, as he buried his face in the pillow, he caught an image of the Lady May.

"She *is* a cat," he thought. "That's all she is—a *cat!*"

But that was not how his mind saw her—quick beyond all dreams of speed, sharp, clever, unbelievably graceful, beautiful, wordless and undemanding.

Where would he ever find a woman who could compare with her?

THE MAN WHO ALWAYS KNEW

by Algis Budrys

The small, thin, stoop-shouldered man sat down on the stool nearest the wall, took a dollar bill out of his wallet, and laid it on the bar. Behind their rimless glasses, his watery blue eyes fastened vacantly on a space somewhere between the end of his nose and the bottles standing on the backbar tiers. An old porkpie hat was squashed down over the few sandy hairs that covered his bony skull. His head was buried deep in the collar of his old, baggy tweed overcoat, and a yellow muffler trailed down from around his neck. His knobby-knuckled hands played with the dollar bill.

Harry, the barkeep, was busy mixing three martinis for a table in the dining room, but as soon as the small man came in he looked up and smiled. And as soon as he had the three filled glasses lined up on a tray for the waiter to pick up, he hurried up to the end of the bar.

"Afternoon, Mr. McMahon! And what'll it be for you today?"

The small man looked up with a wan sigh. "Nothing, yet, Harry. Mind if I just sit and wait a minute?"

"Not at all, Mr. McMahon, not at all." He looked around at the empty stools. "Quiet as the grave in here this afternoon. Same thing over at the lab?"

The small man nodded slowly, looking down at his fingers creasing the dollar bill. "Just a quiet afternoon, I guess," he said in a tired voice. "Nothing's due to come to a head over there until some time next week."

Harry nodded to show he understood. It was that kind of a day. "Haven't seen you for a while, Mr. McMahon—been away again?"

The small man pleated the dollar bill, held one end between thumb and forefinger, and spread the bill like a fan. "That's right. I went down

to Baltimore for a few days." He smoothed out the bill and touched the top of the bar. "You know, Harry, it wouldn't surprise me if next year we could give you a bar varnish you could let absolute alcohol stand on overnight."

Harry shook his head slowly. "Beats me, Mr. McMahon. I never know what's coming out of your lab next. One week it's steam engines, the next it's bar varnish. What gets me is where you find the time. Doing all that traveling and still being the biggest inventor in the world—bigger than Edison, even. Why, just the other day the wife and I went out and bought two of those pocket transceiver sets of yours, and Emma said she didn't see how I could know you. 'A man as busy as Mr. McMahon must be,' she said, 'wouldn't be coming into the bar all the time like you say he does.' Well, that's a wife for you. But she's right. Beats me, too, like I said."

The small man shrugged uncomfortably, and didn't say anything. Then he got a suddenly determined look on his face and started to say something, but just then the waiter stepped up to the bar.

"Two Gibson, one whiskey sour, Harry."

"Coming up. Excuse me, Mr. McMahon. Mix you something while I'm down there?"

The small man shook his head. "Not just yet, Harry."

"Right, Mr. McMahon."

Harry shook up the cocktails briskly. From the sound of it, Mr. McMahon had been about to say something important, and anything Mr. McMahon thought was important would be something you shouldn't miss.

He bumped the shaker, dropped the strainer in, and poured the Gibsons. He just hoped Mr. McMahon hadn't decided it wasn't worth talking about. Let's see what Emma would have to say if he came home and told her what Mr. McMahon had told him, and a year or two later something new—maybe a new kind of home permanent or something—came out. She'd use it. She'd have to use it, because it would just naturally be the best thing on the market. And every time she did, she'd have to remember that Harry had told her first. Let's see her say Mr. McMahon wasn't a steady customer of his then! Bar varnish wasn't in the same league.

The small man was looking into space again, with a sad little smile, when Harry got back to him. He was pushing the dollar bill back and forth with his index fingers. A bunch of people came in the door and Harry muttered under his breath, but they didn't stop at the bar. They went straight from the coat rack to the dining room, and Harry breathed easier. Maybe he'd have time to hear what Mr. McMahon had to say.

"Well, here I am again, Mr. McMahon."

The small man looked up with a sharp gleam in his eyes. "Think I'm pretty hot stuff, eh, Harry?"

"Yes, sir," Harry said, not knowing what to make of it.

"Think I'm the Edison of the age, huh?"

"Well—gosh, Mr. McMahon, you are *better* than Edison!"

The small man's fingers crumpled up the dollar bill and rolled it into a tight ball.

"The Perfect Combustion Engine, the Condensing Steam Jet, the Voice-Operated Typewriter, the Discontinuous Airfoil—things like that, eh?" the small man asked sharply.

"Yes, sir. And the Arc House, and the Minute Meal, and the Lintless Dustcloth—well, gosh, Mr. McMahon, I could go on all day, I guess."

"Didn't invent a one of them," the small man snapped. His shoulders seemed to straighten out from under a heavy load. He looked Harry in the eye. "I never invented anything in my life."

"Two Gibson and another whiskey sour, Harry," the waiter interrupted.

"Yeah—sure," Harry moved uneasily down the bar. He tilted the gin bottle slowly, busy turning things over in his mind. He sneaked a look at Mr. McMahon. The small man was looking down at his hands, curling them up into fists and smiling. He looked happy. That wasn't like him at all.

Harry set the drinks up on the waiter's tray and got back up to the end of the bar.

"Mr. McMahon?"

The small man looked up again. "Yes, Harry?" He *did* look happy—happy all the way through, like a man with insomnia who suddenly feels himself drifting off to sleep.

"You were just saying about that varnish—"

"Fellow in Baltimore. Paints signs for a living. Not very good ones; they weather too fast. I noticed him working, the last time I was down that way."

"I don't follow you, Mr. McMahon."

The small man bounced the balled-up dollar bill on the bar and watched it roll around. "Well, I knew he was a conscientious young fellow, even if he didn't know much about paint. So, yesterday I went back down there, and, sure enough, he'd been fooling around—just taking a little of this and a little of that, stirring it up by guess and by gosh—and he had something he could paint over a sign that would stand up to a blowtorch."

"Golly, Mr. McMahon. I thought you said he didn't know much about paint."

The small man scooped up the bill and smoothed it out. "He didn't. He was just fooling around. Anybody else would have just come up with a gallon of useless goo. But he *looked* like the kind of man who'd happen to hit it right. And he looked like the kind of man who'd hit it sometime about yesterday. So I went down there, made him an offer, and came back with a gallon of what's going to be the best varnish anybody ever put on the market."

Harry twisted his hands uncomfortably in his pockets. "Gee, Mr. McMahon—you mean you do the same thing with everything else?"

"That's right, Harry." The small man pinched the two ends of the dollar bill, brought them together, and then snapped the bill flat with a satisfied *pop!* "Exactly the same thing. I was on a train passing an open field once, and saw a boy flying model airplanes. Two years later, I went back and sure enough, he'd just finished his first drawings on the discontinuous airfoil. I offered him a licensing fee and a good cash advance, and came home with the airfoil." The small man looked down sadly and reminiscently. "He used the money to finance himself through aeronautical engineering school. Never turned out anything new again."

"Gosh, Mr. McMahon. I don't know what to say. You mean you travel around the country just looking for people that are working on something new?"

The small man shook his head. "No. I travel around the country, and I stumble across people who're going to accidentally stumble across something good. I've got secondhand luck." The small man rolled the bill up between his fingers, and smiled with a hurt twist in his sensitive mouth. "It's even better than that. I know more or less *what* they're going to stumble across, and *when* they're going to." He bent the tube he'd made out of the bill. "But I can't develop it myself. I just have to wait. I've only got one talent."

"Well, gee, Mr. McMahon, that's a fine thing to have."

The small man crushed the dollar bill. "Is it, Harry? How do you use it directly? How do you define it? Do you set up shop as McMahon and Company—Secondhand Luck Bought and Sold? Do you get a Nobel Prize for Outstanding Achievement in Luck?"

"You've got a Nobel Prize, Mr. McMahon."

"For a cold cure discovered by a pharmacist who mis-labeled a couple of prescriptions."

"Well, look, Mr. McMahon—that's better than no Nobel Prize at all."

The small man's sensitive mouth twisted again. "Yes, it is, Harry. A little bit." He almost tore the dollar bill. "Just a little bit." He stared into space.

"Mr. McMahon, I wouldn't feel so bad about it if I was you. There's no sense to taking it out on yourself," Harry said worriedly.

The small man shrugged.

Harry shuffled his feet. "I wish there was something I could do for you." It felt funny, being sorry for the luckiest man in the world.

The small man smoothed the dollar out again.

"Two whiskey sour, and another Gibson," the waiter said. Harry moved unhappily down the bar and began to mix, thinking about Mr. McMahon. Then he heard Mr. McMahon get off his stool and come down the bar.

He looked up. The small man was standing opposite him, and looking down at the bar. Harry looked down too, and realized he'd been trying to

make a whiskey sour with Gibson liquor. It looked like nothing he'd ever seen before.

Mr. McMahon pushed the dollar bill across the bar. He reached out and took the funny-looking drink. There was a sad-happy smile on his face.

"That's the one I wanted, Harry," he said.

DREAM STREET

by Frank M. Robinson

Michael Donahue lay on the cinder embankment just outside the Proviso train yards, pressing himself into the shadows cast by the small clump of discouraged looking, oil-stained weeds that grew on top, along the tracks. He sprawled spread-eagled against the slope of cinders, not moving and only breathing enough to catch the mingled odors on the chill night air—the oily, dirty smell of the cinders and the faint, stomach-wrenching scent of slow-frying ham and eggs from the shanty a scant hundred yards away.

They must really be talking about it back at the Home, he thought. Sandy and Mick and Butz and the others were probably undressing for bed now and wondering where he was, wondering if he'd ever make it as far as Roswell and the Roswell Rocket Port. . . .

He moved slightly in the shadows, turning his head to look up at the blazing stars. There was the moon, splotchy with the shadowed areas that were Mare Tranquillitatis and Mare Imbrium. And then there was the tiny red dot of Mars and the fire that was Venus . . .

He changed his position a little, trying to ease his cramped muscles. A stone, loosened by his elbow, went clattering down the embankment. He tensed, but the noise was masked by the usual night sounds of small creatures in the brush along the tracks and by the clangor of the switch engines shuttling cars through the yards a block away.

A phone rang in the shanty. A moment later, men came out with lanterns and started through the yards, searching the low-slung, talgo freight cars.

They were probably looking for him, he thought sickly, automatically flattening himself closer to the cinders. Mr. Gilman of the Home was plenty smart—maybe he had figured that a runaway wouldn't try to leave Chicago by bus or car, that it was too easy to get picked up that way. Maybe he had figured right off that a runaway would try the freight yards.

One of the yard workers was coming closer, swinging his lantern so it cut through the night in big arcs, lighting up the tracks and the cinder slope. Mike bit his lips and prayed and the man stopped. Far down the track another light was fingering its way over the ties. The Diesel grew bigger and rumbled slowly by, light weight freight cars swaying behind it.

It was heading west, Mike observed, his heart suddenly beating faster, and it had a string of empties at the end. He leaped to his feet and started running beside it, not caring whether the man with the lantern saw him or not. The train was picking up speed now, the whistle an eery blast in the night. The empties rattled by, doors halfway open. He cut in towards one. His fingers touched the frame and a sudden burst of speed and a lunge and he was half in and half out, his thin cotton pants whipping about his legs in the chill wind. He hung there a moment, then snatched a chestful of air and muscled himself inside.

He hunkered down by the open door, catching his breath and watching the suburbs roll by. Then they were out of the metropolitan area and peaceful farmlands and darkened woods stretched by the track, quiet and ghostly in the bright moonlight.

"Kina young to be on the lam, aren't you, kid?"

There was the sound of a match being struck in the darkness and the yellow light flickered and flared in the empty freight car. The man who held the match was big, with a bigness that was more muscle than fat. Whiskers sprouted in the creases of his face and under a once-mashed noise while watery blue eyes hid under a tangled undergrowth of brows.

"I–I'm old enough," Mike said defensively.

The ham-like hand that held the match raised it a little so the feeble light fell across Mike's face and chest.

"Just makin' conversation, son. You're big for your age but I could guess it at a young fourteen and not be more'n a month off." There was a pause while the big man looked him over. "Somebody's probably offerin' good money for the whereabouts of a skinny, blonde-haired kid like you. What's your name, Slim?"

Mike hesitated. "Bill."

The big man's eyes narrowed. "That ain't for real, is it? Well, it don't matter anyways. Goin' west?"

Mike felt a little uneasy. "Roswell."

The match went out. The big man didn't bother lighting another one.

"Star-struck, huh?"

Reluctantly. "I guess so." He didn't want to talk about it. Not even Mr. Gilman, who was a right guy every other way, knew how it felt to stare at the stars at night and feel hungry inside, a hunger that didn't go away no matter how many of the Home's pork chops and baked potatoes you ate.

The big man spat on the floor. "You oughta read the statistics, Slim. You're good for a couple of years and then the piles blow up and there

ain't enough of you or the ship to bury in a six inch coffin. You get your name on a hunk of brass and that's it. And believe me, I oughta know."

"You been up, Mister?"

The big man made a noise. "Yeah, I been up. I was on a freight run to Titan for a couple of years."

Titan! The freight car was suddenly the control cabin on an M class rocket, the open door the port looking out on the stars. His voice seemed to come from far away.

"What was it like?"

The big man snorted. "I'll tell you what it was like! There was nuthin' to do. You sit on your fanny and stare out the ports and play cards. And then you land at Ley Village and unload your supplies and get drunk and that's all you do because there's no women there and then you come back. And if you don't have ulcers and weak kidneys and radiation burns by this time, you're one in a million."

The freight car was just a freight car again.

"You're looking at it the wrong way, Mister," Mike protested.

"I suppose you been up?"

"My Dad took me to Crater City once." He'd never forget it, he thought slowly. The glassite domes over the small town and the mine diggings and the dazzling sunlight glinting off the harsh crater walls of Archimedes and Aristillus and the plains of pumice dust stretching beyond . . . He felt in his pocket for the small good-luck charm made out of a hunk of geniune crater rock that his father had once given him. It was round and almost perfectly smooth now from the number of times he had fingered it.

The big man changed the subject. "It takes money to get to Roswell. Even riding the rods all the way."

"I got enough."

The big man's voice turned thoughtful. "I'm sorry to hear you say that, Slim. I kinda need money myself."

He moved quickly in the dark and Mike suddenly felt something sharp and pointed pressing against his throat.

"Just don't move, Slim, and everything will be okay." Mike sat stock still, the inside of his mouth drying up while the palms of his hands turned wet. A practiced hand slipped into his right hand pocket and drew out his wallet. The pressure on his throat relaxed. There was a faint rustle of paper and he knew the big man was feeling for the money.

They had been going up a slight grade and the car door had slid open, showing the black sky and the blazing stars beyond. The big man was to Mike's right but still in front of the door. And he was too busy taking the money out of the wallet to notice anything else. Mike suddenly kicked out with his feet and the big man *oofed* and folded up, a fleeting expression of surprise on his beefy face as he sat down on the air outside the door.

Mike was shaking and sick to his stomach. Talgo trains made a hundred or more on slight grades. The big man wasn't going to bother him or anybody else—again.

His heart gradually slowed and he realized how lucky he had been. He was safe and still headed for Roswell, even if he no longer had the fifty bucks he had saved from his Home allowance. It was going to be hard to get along without the money. But that wasn't the important thing.

The important thing was that he was on his first step to Venusport.

Or Mars Town.

Or even Crater City.

She was big and blonde and bosomy with a too-tight skirt slit up the side and a mouth that was a slash of scarlet. She slouched under the street lamp, watching green-overalled spacemen wander up the street, pausing as coins clinked against closed windows. The sign on the corner said Dream Street—a narrow street with too much neon and too little light, where rotting houses fronted directly on the sidewalks.

Mike watched her for a moment from the shadows across the street, then walked over.

"Could you tell me where Goddard Boulevard is, lady?"

He was still in shadow when he asked it and she automatically arched her back against the lamppost and let her face slip into a professional smile.

"You're not in a hurry to get there, are ya, hon?"

He stepped closer and her smile faded. A thin, blonde-haired kid—tall for his age—in white cotton ducks and a short sleeved shirt and the narrow, intent face that was as much of a trademark as the two bearded ginks on the coughdrop boxes.

The syrup vanished from her voice and left it harsh and gravelly.

"Whaddya wanna find Goddard Boulevard for? See the port?"

He managed an uneasy smile. "I'd like to."

"It's pretty hard to stow away, kid. And you'd never make it in that get-up anyways."

"I—wasn't planning to stow away," he lied, reddening.

"It's written all over your face, kid—and you're going at it all wrong. You think all you wanna do is slip down to the port and watch but once you get there you'll try something foolish and you'll be caught and sent back to your folks."

"They'll never catch me," he said stubbornly.

"I used to know a kid like you," she mused. "A long time ago. He tried all the dodges. And then one day he made it."

For a brief moment her face softened and lost its harsh lines.

"What happened then?" Mike asked curiously.

"He never came back." She paused. "If I were you, I'd get a job down there so you got a reason for being there. Just hang around and the cops'll pick you up. You kids are an old story to them."

He started to ask her a question but she wasn't listening. A man was standing a few feet away, having trouble lighting his cigarette. She put on her smile and raised her voice a little.

"Shag it, kid. Come back when you're older."

He walked down the street past the penny arcades and the shooting galleries and the taverns that smelled of stale beer. The street was thick with green-overalled men wearing the insignia of tube men or pile technicians or the crossed jets of pilots.

". . . the whole planet's nothing but a goddamned swamp . . ."

". . . place called Rose's, just down the block . . ."

". . . for two months nothing but stars, nothing but the goddamned stars . . ."

". . . dry, the atmosphere sucks moisture right out of you . . ."

". . . so I says to the First Mate, you can take your GE jetman and jam . . ."

They were from faraway places, Mike thought dreamily. They had seen the native section of Mars Town, teeming with greenies and leathery skinned colonists, they had seen the rings of Saturn, and stood on the mountains of the moon. And maybe some day soon he would be right there with them . . .

Dream Street abruptly turned into Oberth Avenue and a block more and he was standing under the chestnut trees that bordered the expressway of Goddard Boulevard. It was crowded with eager tourists and misty-eyed colonists-to-be, taking one last look at Earth.

Mike fought his way to the traffic filled street and looked down it. It was right there at the end of the boulevard, a few miles away. A bubble of light made up of search beams and the thin red flares that marked take-offs. The biggest rocket port in the world, fifty square miles of desert sand covered with concrete landing aprons and surrounded with grassy parks so you could bring your lunch and watch the passenger liners take off for Venus or Mars and the freighters head out for the research posts on Saturn's moons.

He glanced down at his shirt and pants, rumpled with having slept in them and spotted with grease from the freight car, and realized the lady he had talked to earlier that evening was probably right. He couldn't get within a mile of the port like he was. He'd have to go at it kind of slow, and in the meantime he'd have to find a job and a place to sleep.

And something to eat.

Mike stood in front of the window of Larry Doby's—a restaurant on Dream Street—and watched the middle-aged owner working at the griddle right in back of the glass.

Larry Doby had thick, corded arms, the beginnings of a small paunch, and a friendly face with an expression of absorbed attention. He ran a greased rag over the griddle and then poured out some batter in three small circles. They sat there a minute, little bubbles formed on top, broke

and dried, and then he flipped them high in the air. They came down with the crispy brown side on top. He scooped them up when they were done, set them on a plate with a pat of butter melting down the sides of the stack, then shoved the plate on the moving belt just behind the counter.

Mike swallowed automatically and realized there was a dull pain in the pit of his stomach. He hadn't had much to eat since leaving the Home and now he was so hungry he was almost sick. His hands explored his pockets hopefully for stray coins. There were none. He felt for his good luck piece, squeezed it affectionately, and went on in.

He took a seat at the end of the counter and pretended that he was reading the menu dial selector. You punched out your selection, a duplicate of it appeared on the board above the short-order cook working in the window, and he fixed it up and set it on the belt. You took it off when it got to your place. And if you didn't like the looks of it, you just didn't claim it—the belt took it back to the cook.

Mike watched the belt nervously, hoping that nobody was watching. The pickings on the belt were slim—apparently Larry's had only satisfied customers. Finally a sweet roll came down that nobody had claimed. Mike palmed it under a paper napkin and started to walk out.

At the door, Larry set three pancakes on a plate with one hand and grabbed Mike by the shirt collar with the other. "Ruby!" A thin, pale-faced woman came out of the back room. "Take over, will you?"

He walked Mike over to a table at the side. "You don't eat unless you pay, sport. One roll is an eighth of a credit. How about it?"

Mike let the roll fall from his hand to the table top. "I don't have any money," he said sullenly.

Larry gave him a long, hard look that took in his rumpled shirt and dirt smeared pants. "Sit down—and don't try to beat it."

Mike sagged into one of the chairs. This was it, he thought, almost too tired to care. By tomorrow he'd be on his way back to the Home and the gang would call him a stupe—and they'd be right. The closest he'd ever get to Mars would be looking at it through his homemade telescope.

A stack of cakes was shoved under his nose and he looked up to find the griddle man offering him a fork.

"Go ahead, eat 'em sport! You're hungry, ain'tcha?" He sat down in the other chair and watched Mike eat. "Where's your folks?"

Mike swallowed and wiped the syrup off his mouth with the back of his hand. "Don't have any—they're dead."

Larry leaned back in his chair and worked at his teeth with a toothpick, "I'll buy that, though you don't look like the type to be on your own."

"I get by."

Larry's face was blank. "Yeah, I bet you do." He studied Mike carefully. "I got a proposition, sport. I need help, somebody to wait table. If I let the wife do it, too many guys make passes at her and there's trouble. You want a job, you can have it."

Mike made a production out of sopping up the syrup on his plate with a hunk of bread. It was nice of him, he thought slowly. But he'd been taking charity ever since his old man had died and he was sick of it.

"Thanks, but . . ."

Larry was belligerent. "But what? You want to hold me up for more dough? I don't pay much but I pay regular and on top of that, I'll let you sleep in back, okay?"

It didn't sound like charity, Mike admitted to himself, it looked like if he didn't take it, the griddle man would have to find somebody else. Something caught in his throat. "Gee, thanks a lot!" he blurted.

Larry got up to go, then sat down again, looking thoughtful. "Just one thing, sport. I've had kids work here before and they usually ended up trying to snag a berth on one of the rockets out at the port. The cops catch 'em and ship 'em back to their home town and I usually never find out until a couple of days later. If you're gonna do something foolish, let me know beforehand, will you?" He paused, looking hard at Mike again. "And think it over before you take off. I came out here fifteen years ago with big ideas, too. I guess you begin to grow up when you realize you ain't gonna set the world on fire." He wiped the table with his apron and picked up the dishes. "You can get all the adventure you want, just listening to the guys in here talk. Keep your ears open—maybe you'll hear things that'll make you change your mind."

"Yeah, I might," Mike said absently.

But he knew that nothing he heard would make him change his mind.

He liked working at Larry's restaurant. The pay was low but the meals were good and Ruby took care of his laundry so it averaged out pretty well. He could even set some money aside for the big plan.

But the best thing about working there was that he could listen to the talk that swirled along the counter and among the tables. Talk about places he had never seen, about places he had only read about. . . .

There was an old cook on the Earth-Moon run, practically an overnight hop, who had been working on the big ships ever since the early days when Crater City was nothing but a collection of pressurized steel bubbles huddling under the crater ledges of Archimedes. And there was Gim Wong, a tube man on the *Martian Prince*, a freighter on the regular run to the red planet. Gim was a walking history book, a man who knew more about the start of the colonization of the planets—Mike thought—than any other man living . . .

"Setting up colonies is easy now, but you should have seen it when they first started planting colonies on Mars. I remember bringing in the first load, and then the relief supplies a year later. Half the original colonists had frozen to death and the other half were fast on their way to starving. Seems their atomics man had died of the crawling sickness shortly after arrival and none of the rest knew how to run the power

plant, couldn't even call for help. And then there was the time on Io when . . ."

But the best one of all was Captain Lieberman of the Cameron-Smith lines. He was a thin, wiry little man with pencil-thin waxed moustache and frigid blue eyes—real class. He and his second in command, a first mate named Schacht, stopped in at Larry's after every trip for a bowl of chili and crackers made the way that only Larry could.

Mike brought them their orders, then found one reason or another to hang around their table, straining his ears for the cold recital of facts and figures between Lieberman and Schacht, facts and figures that were far more romantic to him than either man could have imagined.

One day Lieberman suddenly broke off in the middle of a discussion of the drawbacks of the concrete landing aprons on Mars and fixed Mike with a stony stare.

"You've got big ears, son."

Mike reddened and started to move away. "Sorry, sir."

"Come here," Lieberman said curtly.

Mike walked over, nervously wiping his hands on the cotton towel wrapped around his waist.

"You like to listen to us talk about space,"—he waved his arms at the ceiling—"don't you?"

Mike flushed. "Yes, sir. I'd like to go out there some day."

"Why?"

There were a million reasons, Mike thought, but now that he had been pinned down, there were none that actually held water, none that would make much sense to Lieberman.

"I . . . I just want to, that's all."

Lieberman looked thoughtful. "That's the best answer I've heard yet. None of the others are worth a damn. But it isn't everything you youngsters think it is. It's just hard work and boredom and if you've got any other ideas, forget them." His piercing eyes played coldly over Mike. "Maybe after you've seen a few ships hulled by meteors and men die trying to breathe space, some of the glamor would wear off."

Mike backed off towards the kitchen, embarrassed. "I—I got a pretty good idea of what it's like, sir."

Lieberman snorted. "All you youngsters think you do."

Mike was almost back to the kitchen when he stopped dead. The tall, thin man at the table by the kitchen door. He'd recognize him anywheres. The deep eyes and the thinning grey hair and the set of the shoulders . . . And the man had seen him.

He walked over. "Hello, Mr. Gilman."

The voice was friendly enough. "Have a seat, Mike. I want to talk to you." Mike folded quietly into the offered chair. "You want to take me back, don't you?"

"The Home isn't such a bad place, Mike. I don't see why you ran away."

Mike shrugged, his face blank. "You wouldn't understand, Mr. Gilman."

"I think I do." The voice turned persuasive. "What's wrong with doing it our way, Mike? You'll be sent to school, you'll be taught the things you should know, rather than by learning by experience. You'll get what you want and you'll be better prepared for it. A few more years and you'll be apprenticed out to one of the regular lines."

Mike struggled to see it but it wasn't any good. His voice sounded tortured. "A few more years isn't today, Mr. Gilman!"

The tall man looked at him thoughtfully. "You can't wait, can you?" He got up. "Let's go, Mike."

"I'll have to get my things," Mike mumbled.

Mr. Gilman looked at his watch. "Give you five minutes—hurry it up."

Mike went out to the kitchen. It was empty. Larry was working in the front window, drawing in the evening customers. He wadded up his towel and threw it in the dirty clothes bin, then took down an empty pepper can from the spice shelf, opened it, and shook out his savings.

He was sorry he couldn't say goodbye to Larry. He was sorry, too, that he had to run out on Mr. Gilman.

But this was the best way.

The gnarled little man wearing the green eye shade said: "You got the money?"

Mike placed the bills on the battered table and pushed them down to him.

The man counted it carefully, then shoved it inside a tattered wallet. "How do you know I just won't take your money and tell you to get the hell out of here, son?"

"I heard you were a pretty square guy," Mike said simply.

The man laughed. "I should be ashamed of myself when a kid tells me that. Now exactly what is it you want?"

Mike moistened his dry lips with his tongue. "I want . . . an identity. You know, cards and papers for a background, to show I have parents and live in town here."

"What do you want it for?"

Mike hesitated. He felt that he had confided in too many people and that any of them could cross him up by telling. "You don't need to know, do you?"

The man took out his wallet, spilled the money on the table, and shoved it back toward Mike. "Here's your money. Beat it."

"I want to get a job," Mike said quickly. "Down at the port."

The man took the money back. "You should have told me at the beginning," he said quietly. "How do you expect me to do my job if I don't know what the hell you want? Who do you want a job with?"

"Atlas Provisions."

The man nodded. "Good outfit. They're not too particular." He brought up a jar of India ink from the drawer, then hesitated. "It ain't for me to advise you, son, but are you sure you know what you're doing? Space isn't everything it's cracked up to be, you know. You might get a couple of days out and decide you don't like it—but then you'd be stuck."

Everybody was trying to discourage him, Mike thought stubbornly. But he was going to get to the stars. He was going to go if he had to walk every mile of the way and if it took years.

"I've thought about it for a long time. I'm sure."

The man sighed and took a few blank cards and some stationery out of the drawer, then fished around in a small cabinet for an assortment of fine lettering pens. "You'll need a work permit and a letter from your folks and maybe some recommendations and a few other items to back them up. Come back in an hour and you'll be all set."

The sun was a blinding white off the concrete aprons and the little brass plaques set in them. Mike shielded his eyes and shifted slightly on the back of the fork lift truck that was hauling the train of pallets of concentrated food and provisions and winding its way among the different aprons. He twisted around. A mile back he could see the green parks and the bunting and waving flags from tall flagpoles that jutted up over the trees.

The truck chugged around another apron and passed the *Empress of Mars*, a huge freighter impossibly balanced on her rear jets. Mike gasped in awe at the twenty story high ship, then let his interest wander to another, even larger ship.

His eyes lowered to the concrete. It was about here, where the old *Ashenden's* berth had been. His eyes searched the ground, found a little brass plaque that he had been shown a picture of once—a long time ago—and then the truck passed it up and it was lost in the distance, a small speck of yellow metal glaring in the sunlight. They were passing other ships now, the *Asteroid Queen*, the *Saturnia*, and the new *Lusitania*—the last a passenger liner with a double row of quartz view-ports around her mid-section.

Elmer Carter—Mike's boss—stopped the truck beneath the support fins of the *Star Quest* and stood up and stretched. He was a fat man with thin arms and even thinner legs; Mike thought he looked like a golf ball on stilts.

The loading crew showed up a minute later and started to manhandle the crates and boxes to a sling let down from the waist of the ship.

"Okay, Mike, you got the credit sheets?"

Mike felt in the pocket of his Atlas uniform and brought out the sheets. Elmer started to check them and the first sling-load went on board. "You keep count too, Mike—we don't want to miss anything."

It was a hot day and by the time they were done, sweat had stained Elmer's shirt and was rolling down his fat cheeks. He sighed and put away his slips: the last sling-load was aboard and the loading crew had gone off to another job. He started the fork lift truck when suddenly Mike said: "Hey, it looks like they forgot something!"

Elmer looked startled. "No kidding!" He got out and waddled to the third pallet back. A small crate had fallen in between the third and fourth pallet-trucks. He picked up the small crate gingerly. "We shoulda caught this, Mike. It's B1 concentrates."

Mike bit his lips. "It's my fault. I'm new on the job and . . ."

Elmer shook his head. "It ain't your fault," he said generously. "Those dumbheads of loaders overlooked it." He looked worried. "They need these, Mike—it'll be my job if they don't get them. And blastoff's only fifteen minutes away."

It was a hot day and Elmer was already sopping wet and bone tired. He looked up the ladder that crawled up the hull to the port that opened in the waist. It was five stories up, that port. A long haul. A mighty long haul.

Mike watched the look of dismay spread over Elmer's face. It was hot and the port was quiet except for the cries of the loading crew two ships down. Things were on a tight schedule, Mike knew—they wouldn't have time to call the crews back. He tried to make his voice sound casual. "I can take it up and be back in five minutes."

Relief flooded Elmer's face, relief mixed with apprehension over what the company would do if they found out. Letting kids go in the rockets wasn't company policy. He shoved the box in Mike's arms. "Okay, kid, but shake it up. No sight-seeing."

Mike tucked the box in his shirt and started up the ladder. The crew was on board and probably strapped down by now, he thought. They were all set to go. His heart started to pound. The *Star Quest* was slated for a lift to Mars and that was a good two month trip. By the end of it, if he worked hard, he could be a third class apprentice. Spacemen—good spacemen—were scarce and it didn't make a heck of a lot of difference how old you were. The government griped but nobody made much fuss.

He was five stories up now and he turned for one last look at the port of Roswell. Elmer was a tiny figure below him, and the pallets looked like they were made out of match sticks. There were other ships around him, standing up like needles, and then—farther off—the parks and the wide streak of Goddard Boulevard. He could even see the section that was Dream Street. For a minute he thought he could make out Larry's restaurant, then realized he was too far away.

He looked down at Elmer again, hesitating a moment. It would probably mean Elmer's job. He turned back to the port. His heart was pounding and there was a roaring in his ears. He ran a moist thumb over his good luck piece and went in the air lock.

"Look, Mr. Gilman, I didn't know who the hell the kid was! He's assigned to work with me and I don't ask questions—nobody's paying me for asking questions! The loaders leave this crate behind and I know it'll mean my job if I don't get it aboard and the kid volunteers to take it up. Do I know he's going to stow away? Look at me, I'm an old man—I can't go climbing five stories of ladder!"

Gilman nodded tiredly. "Okay, Carter, forget it. I'll fix it up with Atlas so you don't get fired."

Carter left and Gilman turned back to the rocket port. Far out on the huge expanse of concrete there was a scorched spot where the *Star Quest* had been a few moments before. He looked at it thoughtfully.

Larry Doby shook his head.

"I thought I had him pretty well talked out of it at the restaurant, Mr. Gilman. Maybe if I had notified you sooner, you could have stopped him."

"I didn't want to stop him," Gilman said dryly. "Every ship that leaves this port has provisions for one or two stowaways. A hundred stowaways leave Roswell every month—kids who want to see the stars. We make it difficult for stowaways, scare away those who just want a thrill, but we don't try to stop them, Doby."

Larry looked puzzled. "I don't get you."

"All right," Gilman said slowly, "take Mike. He'll be a good spaceman. His father used to be on the Earth-Moon run; got killed when the pile of the *Ashenden* blew up in '97. That's why Mike was in the Home for the Children of Space. He knows a lot of the ropes already, he picked up a lot from his father. In a way, you might say that Mike was bred for space." He paused. "And he's got something pretty valuable, something that will make him one of the best of the lot—and Lord only knows we need them."

"What's that?"

"A long time ago, kids used to run away to sea. There was—well, something that called them. They wanted to go. That's why Mike will be so good on the rockets. He isn't in it for the money, the dangers don't mean anything to him. He's got something you have to have for the job—he *wants* to go."

"I don't know," Larry said thoughtfully. "A lot of kids want to run away for the glamor, you know—visiting strange lands, that sort of thing. What happens when Mike finds out there isn't any glamor, that the exotic foreign places just ain't?"

"The glamor of anything is in the mind of the beholder," Gilman said slowly.

The sun had started to drop in the sky and a chill wind blew out of the east. Larry shivered.

"Seems to me like the kid has the short end of the stick. The government gets men for the spaceships but what do they get in turn? What's Mike gonna get out of this?"

Gilman turned a little into the fading sun and Larry caught the telltale flecks of flesh-colored tattooing that hid the radiation burns and the ultraviolet scars on Gilman's face.

"What will he get out of this?" Gilman asked slowly, bleakly. His voice filled with frustrated puzzlement at a man who didn't understand, who would never understand. "He'll get the stars, Carter, the stars. . . ."

YOU CREATED US

by Tom Godwin

He saw the things for the first time in the spring of 1956. A dust storm was raging across the southern Nevada desert that night, making a roaring, swirling medium through which his headlights penetrated for a limited distance and forcing him to drive slowly despite the importance of his being in San Francisco before noon of the following day. He was a hundred miles north of Las Vegas when he saw them—suddenly caught in the illumination of his headlights as he swung around a curve.

There were two of them, and they were leaping up the embankment onto the highway, less than a hundred feet ahead of him, and in the first instant of seeing them he thought they were huge and grotesquely misshapen men. For an instant the swirling dust partly obscured them. Then they looked toward him as they bounded across the highway, and he knew they were not men. Their eyes blazed green as no human eyes ever could.

He was almost abreast of them as they leaped down the opposite embankment and he saw them quite clearly for a moment. They ran on two legs, as men normally would run, but they were gray and scaly things eight feet tall. They had reptilian, lizard-like faces and they ran stooped forward a little as if to balance their heavy tails.

His tires screamed above the roar of the wind as he jammed on the brakes and reached for the spotlight control. He was beyond them when his car slowed to a stop and the beam of the spotlight finally picked them out. It was a disappointing glimpse, for it revealed only their gray backs disappearing into the windswept darkness to the west.

He backed down the highway to the place where they had crossed, and got out with a flashlight to look at the tracks. They were still visible in

the soft silt beyond the highway. Great three-toed imprints they were, clawed, with the first and fifth toes set far back, as the digits are set on the foot of a lizard.

He absently rubbed the back of his head, which felt oddly numb, and followed the tracks for some distance out across the desert. The wind had erased them by the time he had followed them for six hundred feet and when he returned to the car, frowning uneasily, the tracks by the highway had also disappeared.

Back in his car, he checked the mileage from Las Vegas with his map and compass. He found the lizard-things had come from the direction of the atomic bomb test site and that they had been going toward the Funeral Range, which bounded Death Valley along its eastern side in that area.

There was a village fifteen miles from where he had halted and he stopped there for a sandwich. Two hours later, and a hundred miles farther on, the numbness which he had noticed only subconsciously, suddenly left the back of his head. With its going, the realization and fear came to him.

He had seen things that had not existed upon Earth for a hundred million years, if ever—and he had been no more than mildly interested. He had seen them at close range as his car swerved past them. He had seen the powerful bulk of them, had seen the way their jaws were lined with knife-like serrations. Either of them could have torn him into ribbons in a matter of seconds.

Yet, knowing that, he had followed their tracks out into the darkness armed only with a flashlight. He had not been afraid and only a mindless fool would have been unafraid under such unusual circumstances.

He had told no one in the village of what he had seen as he ate his sandwich. At the time it had seemed of little importance to him. Now, it was too late to tell them. He could not go back and say: "By the way, I forgot to mention it when I was here before. I saw a couple of creatures as large as young dinosaurs cross the highway fifteen miles south of here."

It was not too late to inform the Army authorities, of course. But what would they think of a phone call in the middle of the night from a madman or a drunk with a wild story of lizard-monsters coming from the atomic bomb test site?

And what if he should risk losing the promotion to superintendent of his company's San Francisco plant by driving back to the army base and telling the authorities in person what he had seen? Would they believe an incredible story which he could not prove and which would indicate that he was not sane.

And in addition he wore a silver plate on his skull where a piece of Chinese shrapnel in Korea had almost taken his life. Would not that be enough in itself to insure that all concerned would dismiss what he had seen as a hallucination caused by the old brain injury?

He knew it had been no hallucination. Yet he had reacted in a manner not at all normal. Why? What had dulled his mind and caused him to accept it all with merely casual interest? Had the lizards done something to him, exerted some kind of hypnotic influence over him, as snakes were said to be able to do when they preyed on small birds? Or was it that the old injury under the silver plate on his skull had manifested itself at last, and he had made the first terrifying step into insanity that night?

Which was it?

He had no way of knowing for sure and fear and uncertainty rode with him for the rest of the night . . .

The demands of his job kept him in San Francisco for three years. During the first year he watched the papers carefully for any scoffingly skeptical reports of lizard-monsters in southern Nevada. There were none and even before the year was out he almost succeeded in forgetting what he had seen. He almost succeeded in making himself believe he had been tired and drowsy from the night driving and had been deceived by no more than two clouds of dust whipping across the highway.

Yet—there had been the green glow of their eyes in his headlights and there had been their tracks. Surely he could not have imagined the tracks! And if he had not imagined them, then the lizard-things might still be in the Funeral Range along the east side of Death Valley.

The creatures had been going toward a particular section of the Funerals—a place on their summit called Chloride Cliff. He had once visited Chloride Cliff and he knew that a trail led down from it into Death Valley, proceeding past an old mine that had known no activity for many years.

It occurred to him that the mine's many tunnels would be a perfect hiding place for the lizard-things—until he remembered that Chloride Cliff was a point of interest to the Death Valley winter tourist traffic. It was only a three-mile hike from the end of the dirt side-road up to the abandoned diggings and even though only a minor number of tourists would care to make the hike, it could be safely presumed that at least two or three a week would climb all the way up to the mine. Which meant that at least fifty people must have been to the mine since the night he had seen the lizards.

He met many different people in his work and he acquired the habit of bringing Death Valley into the conversation whenever he could do so in a casual manner. A man from Los Angeles supplied the first clue unimportant though it was in itself. His informant described the various points of interest in Death Valley with a detailed and painstaking clarity: Dante's View, Scotty's Castle, Ubehebe Crater and all the other places. But of the old mine he could only say vaguely:

"There were some tunnels there on a steep mountainside. I don't remember now what they looked like nor how many there were . . ."

Later, he met a man from Oregon who told him, when he inquired

about the mine: "I remember climbing up to it, but I've forgotten now just what the tunnels were like."

A client of his firm from Ohio mentioned the mine in the same vague way, as did three young mining engineers from Colorado. The young mining engineers, even though green and inexperienced, should in obligation to their profession have observed the old workings with more than casual interest.

Instead, they couldn't even recall the formation of the rock, although they remembered well the mines at Skidoo, Bullfrog, Rhyolite and the other old camps in that area.

A question arose, and became an obsession with him: *Were the lizards living in the tunnels and using their hypnotic powers to make people forget what they had seen?*

Then the tormenting problem of the lizards lost some of its importance as the shadow of war grew increasingly darker throughout 1959. On May 10, 1960, he received a letter from his superiors, ordering him to the east coast and saying in part:

"With war almost certain to come within the next few months, San Francisco's vulnerability as a target area for enemy bombs makes further expansion of the San Francisco plant extremely unwise . . ."

He debated only briefly about what he would do. He would go to the east coast, of course, but not before he had gone to Death Valley. He could drive his own car east, with the side trip to Death Valley taking no more than an extra day at the most. And it would be his last and only chance to learn the truth about the lizard-things . . .

Death Valley was blue with haze under the warm spring sun as he rolled down the long grade from Daylight Pass, between mountains decked in the brightest of Maytime finery. To his left was the harsh, canyon-riven Funeral Range and he drove slowly after he passed the Stovepipe Wells junction so that he would not miss the dirt road he was seeking. He came to it and followed it down into the broad wash and up the long slope to the foot of the mountain.

He parked his car near the beginning of the trail, and slipped on a light jacket—and dropped an automatic pistol in the right pocket and a small camera in the left. He hesitated a moment, and then decided that a notebook and pencil might also prove of value.

He started up the trail then, in his growing excitement forgetting to take the key out of the car. He remembered the oversight when he was a hundred feet up, but he did not turn back. The important thing was to reach the old tunnels, and to take pictures of them, even if he saw nothing. Light-and-shadow impressions on camera film would be incapable of a memory lapse and could not fade away.

He was sweating when he reached the end of the first and steepest half of the climb. His breath came hard and panting, but he refused to stop

to rest. He followed the trail in a fast walk, the mountain rearing steeply above him and the canyon wall dropping swiftly away below.

He came first upon the old camp, where the few remaining buildings were warped with age, and the empty, crooked windows gaped vacantly. He passed the abandoned structures with hardly a glance, his attention on the steep mountainside above him where he could already see waste dumps that marked the location of the mine tunnels.

It was impossible to fully control his impatience and he was breathing hard again when the steep trail encircled one of the dumps and the first tunnel appeared suddenly before him. He stopped in his tracks, his hand on the pistol, and studied the deserted excavation while his breathing slowed toward normal.

There was nothing to see—only the empty, yawning, portal of the tunnel and the small, flat area of the waste dump before it. Then, as he stood there, a wisp of a breeze stirred and brought an odor to him from the tunnel. It was, unmistakably, the odor of decaying flesh. *And with it came the sensation of being watched.*

He took the camera from his pocket—the camera that would view the portal with its cold mechanical eye and record exactly what it saw. He found his hands were trembling unaccountably and his fingers had become awkward and wooden. He tried to control the trembling, fearful he would drop the camera before he could use it, and he tried at the same time to set it for the proper range.

Suddenly the camera dropped out of his hands. He grabbed at it frantically, striking it with the side of his hand instead of catching it. It was knocked to one side by the blow, and out over the edge of the dump. It bounced once, spun outward in a wide arc and struck the rocks far below with a shattering sound.

When he turned back toward the tunnel the lizard-thing had emerged from the shadows and was standing nine feet in front of him, watching him.

His right hand stabbed for the pistol in his pocket while he made a split-second appraisal of the creature. It stood upright on its big, long-toed feet, towering a full two feet higher than the tunnel opening at its back. Its arms and hands were almost human in shape, though huge and scaled, and the eyes in its massive, reptilian face were regarding him with a degree of intelligence that chilled him to the core of his being.

His fingers touched the butt of the pistol in his pocket, reached around it, and went numb and lifeless.

He knew, then, why his hands had trembled and caused him to drop the camera and he noticed, without surprise, that the lizard had permitted his left hand to return to normal. But the right hand that gripped the pistol still remained limp and numb.

The lizard spoke to him then, soundlessly, in his mind:

Go to the tunnels above.

A strange coldness seemed to be touching his brain, and he obeyed without attempting to resist. But his mind was clear and he saw something he had not noticed before—the tracks of wild burros and mountain sheep in the trail ahead of him. The tracks led only one way, toward the upper tunnels.

He recalled with a shudder the odor of decaying flesh, and wondered if the lizards let some of the meat age, as a man might let cheese age to improve its flavor.

There were three of them standing before the portal of one of the upper tunnels. A thought came to him from the center one as he stopped before it:

We have been expecting you.

He asked the question that he was sure could have but one answer: "Are you mutants from the atomic bomb test site?"

Yes.

The coldness still hovered around his mind, but he was no longer afraid, nor even nervous. For some reason they wanted him to be calm and at ease. But the coldness impinging on his brain was not enough to make him forget the importance of learning all he could about them.

"When did it start?" he asked. "And what were you, before?"

It began in the spring of Nineteen fifty-five. The radiations from the bomb blast affected the eggs of an ordinary desert lizard. I and four others were the result.

"But the two I saw crossing the highway were already grown."

We reach the adult stage in one year.

He wondered how they had provided themselves with food, to grow to such a size in so short a time.

The lizard answered his unspoken question:

The mutation created by your bomb represents evolution to the near-perfect level. We can subsist on anything organic, including all kinds of desert vegetation, even though we prefer meat.

He wondered if there were only five of them, if they were incapable of reproduction.

The lizard's thought came:

We can reproduce. There are many of us in these tunnels and there will be many more when this year's eggs hatch.

So the lizards were mutations as he had suspected from the night of his first encounter with them. The hard radiations from the bomb had altered a desert lizard's eggs, and had done something to the developing embryo that was the equivalent of a hundred million years of evolution—or perhaps a thousand million.

True evolution was slow—a selective process of trial and error over millions of years. What had been the hit-or-miss likelihood that the lizard's eggs would be profoundly affected by the radiations? One chance occurrence out of a hundred million?

It did not matter, because the laws of chance were blind and without memory. A tossed coin would, in the long run, come up exactly fifty percent heads and fifty percent tails. But a coin had no memory and it could come up heads for a hundred times in succession. And the laws of chance evolution, produced by the hard radiations, had no memory either. They would as calmly produce one successful mutation out of a hundred million failures in one year as in a hundred million years.

They would—and they had.

He asked the lizard another question: "Why is it that I saw you that night on the highway and remembered when the others—the ones who have seen you up here—can't remember?"

That was partly due to the brain injury you once had, and partly to the fact we were only one year old and had not fully learned how to use our hypnotic powers.

"Why do you hide?" he asked. "Why are you so afraid that humans will know of your existence?"

The lizard's face remained expressionless but he sensed amusement in the way it regarded him.

What would be their reaction if they knew of us? They would want to see us caged, placed on exhibit. They would want their scientists to examine us. And when they found their minds were helpless before ours, they would want to destroy us. Your species and mine are too different for them to ever exist side by side.

"What are you going to do?" he asked. "You can't stay here always. There will be too many of you. Someday you will have to let humans know of your existence."

That is being arranged.

"How do you mean?"

We are letting you humans prepare the way for us.

For a moment he was puzzled. Then, suddenly, he knew what the lizard meant. The insanity of hate and fear and suspicion that filled the world—the insanity that was growing each day and could result only in war.

There is no distance limit to our telepathic influence, the lizard said. *We can concentrate upon influencing the important few among your enemies—the policy makers, the agitators, the ones in position to make war. This we are doing. With your own government, we have only to make certain that an enemy attack will find you unprepared. This, too, is being done.*

He thought of the exaggerated claims so often made of American military power and of the seldom-published truth: that the United States was vulnerable to any surprise attack, and lacked even a practical warning system.

How much of that ignorance was due to the mumbo-jumbo of Security? Surely people would demand an adequate warning and defense system if

they knew the true peril of their circumstances. But Security did not dare tell them, for in theory such a disclosure would give information to the enemy! It was better to pretend that an adequate defense system already existed, better to label such difficult problems "Top Secret" and file them away and forget them.

The amusement was stronger in the lizard's thought:

This mania for secrecy has been every useful to us and we have encouraged its growth.

"So you would have Asia destroy the United States?"

Let us say the western hemisphere.

"And then what? What would you do with a country made unlivable by radiation from the atomic and hydrogen bombs?"

We are immune to hard radiations.

The coldness and numbness around his brain seemed to be increasing and the scene was beginning to take on a quality of nightmare unreality to him. He knew they were doing something to his brain, to make him forget as they had made all the others forget.

He did the only thing he knew to do. He wrote a short sentence on the notebook in his pocket, quickly, before the lizard could realize what his intentions were, and awkwardly because he had to use his left hand.

He half expected the lizard to halt the writing before it was completed. But the lizard did no more than stare at him with its scaly face expressionless. He wrote only one sentence—afraid to risk discovery by writing more. He was convinced that the one sentence would be enough. It would convey the needed warning, even if the lizards did make him forget that he had ever seen them.

"So you'll have the western hemisphere attacked?" he asked. "You'll have us killed with bombs and bacteria until there are none of us left to oppose you. What about Europe and Asia? What will you do with them?"

Destruction of human life on the western hemisphere will give us time and room to expand. While doing so we will continue to excite the various nations of Europe and Asia into war and mutual destruction.

"You have it all thought out, then?"

We have. It is very simple. We have only to encourage the human race's own tendencies and capacities for self-destruction.

"There are other tendencies, too."

Yes—the ones you would term noble or humanitarian. It is necessary for our survival that we suppress the humanitarian instincts among you. And none of you will ever know what is being done to you.

There was a moment of silence, and then the lizard's thought came swiftly again:

Do you remember tyrannosaurus rex?

Tyrannosaurus rex—the most formidable of all the reptiles, the mightiest engine of destruction to ever walk the face of the earth. He had been

a biped, with claws capable of handling objects, and he had possessed teeth–rimmed jaws so massive that no other creature had dared oppose him. He had been the supreme species and should have survived.

But there had been little rodent-like animals, the remote ancestors of horses and elephants, tigers and men, and they had eaten the eggs of *tyrannosaurus rex. Tyrannosaurus rex* had not even noticed the little animals, and had become extinct without ever knowing the reason why.

Survival of the fittest–and how do you fight something you cannot see? How do men fight something which can control their minds and keep them ignorant of its existence?

He had partially resisted their power before. What if he could retain his resistance and remember what he had seen, and lead other men to the tunnels and show them the lizards?

The thought of the lizard came:

They would see nothing and would have you confined as an insane person.

Did the statement imply that the lizards could not completely destroy his resistance to their hypnotic powers?

You will forget. It was necessary to engage you in conversation for a while, to distract your attention while we broke down the resistance the brain injury had given you. And it has entertained us to some extent to observe your reactions.

"You can't hope to have all of us killed," he said. "There will be some of us who will live through the germ warfare, some of us who won't get enough of the radioactive dust to die. Those who survive may someday learn what you did to them."

Our plans include making use of the survivors. They will be a useful source of labor and food.

He was sharply aware again of the carrion odor that emanated from the lizards and of the burro and sheep tracks he had seen.

"You will–eat us?"

Of course. Now, you will go.

The muscles of his legs obeyed the command, without volition on his part. He did not even try to resist. His right hand still remained limp and helpless on the pistol and there was only the one hope left–to reach his car and the safety of a greater distance before they learned what he had written in the notebook. If he could only retain just a little of his memory, together with the warning he had written to himself, he would find a way to destroy the lizard nest.

He began the steep descent, not looking back. He passed the first lizard he had seen. It was standing in the same place, watching him with the same cold intelligence in its eyes and the same carrion odor emanating from it.

He hurried on, down to the warped and empty shells that had been houses and past them. Life suddenly returned to his right hand and he

stopped a moment to look back the way he had come. But the tunnel portals were not visible from where he stood—only the lower sides of the high waste dumps.

He went on in a fast walk, gripping the notebook in his pocket as though the feel of it might help him remember and help him hold off the encroachment of the cold numbness around his mind.

But the numbness increased as he walked and he broke into a run as the fear of forgetting what he had seen intensified. It became greater, an apprehension that was close to terror. He was still running when he reached the final and steepest half of the trail.

He did not pause for breath, not even when he fell once and almost slid over the edge of the trail and down into the rocky bottom of the canyon far below. There was something far more important than his individual survival involved and if only he could reach his car with the warning he had written to himself . . .

He was bruised and staggering with exhaustion when he came at last to his car. But he could still remember and he still held the notebook firmly clasped in his hand. He started the engine the moment he was behind the wheel and tore the top sheet from the notebook, to put it in his billfold where he would be certain to see it again, no matter what happened to him. The writing on it was clumsy and scrawling but it was legible:

Mutants—tunnels—hypnotic powers—invisible—DANGER.

He folded the note carefully, thinking of the world as it would be when the bombs and bacteria had played their roles—thinking of the dead, shattered cities and the lifeless fields, and the long, slow process of evolution that had begun as a speck of protoplasm in an Archeozoic sea two billion years before.

It had been a long way up from that mindless speck of protoplasm, up and up through the fishes and the lung-fishes, and the amphibians, and then higher still through the Age of Reptiles and the Age of Mammals, to Man. Man, naked and defenseless, with neither fangs nor claws, who had arisen to dominate the world.

And now a new species had appeared, created by chance, to destroy Man as thoroughly as Man's remote mammalian ancestors had destroyed *tyrannosaurus rex*. If he ever forgot what he had seen, if the lizards were not checked, there would be a quick end to the long, long climb toward the stars. It would be violence and death and radioactive dust swirling across a lifeless land . . .

From high on the mountain behind him came a thought, cold and taunting with amusement:

Remember! You, yourselves, created us.

Then the full force of the numbness swept through his mind, and memory and consciousness fled.

He shook his head, wondering what had caused the fleeting vertigo, and

unfolded the paper in his hand curiously. He read: *Mutants–tunnels–hypnotic powers–invisible–DANGER.*

It seemed to him he could remember it as a memorandum he had written before leaving San Francisco, something to remind him to look at the tunnels. He tore the paper into bits and threw them out the window of the car, where the Death Valley wind set them to spinning and dancing.

Death Valley . . . For a moment, as he drove through the swirling scraps of paper, it seemed to him the name should have some grim significance. And, for a moment, it seemed to him he could sense something far behind him on the mountain regarding him with sardonic amusement.

Then the feeling passed as he remembered he had found nothing but empty tunnels there and he drove on, thinking, for some strange reason, of the mighty *tyrannosaurus rex* dying out because some little animals he did not notice were eating his eggs.

SWENSON, DISPATCHER

by R. DeWitt Miller

It was on October 15, 2177, that Swenson staggered into the offices of Acme Interplanetary Express and demanded a job as dispatcher.

They threw him out. They forgot to lock the door. The next time they threw him out, they remembered to lock the door but forgot the window.

The dingy office was on the ground floor and Swenson was a tall man. When he came in the window, the distraught Acme Board of Directors realized that they had something unusual in the way of determined drunks to deal with.

Acme was one of the small hermaphroditic companies—hauling mainly freight, but shipping a few passengers—which were an outgrowth of the most recent war to create peace.

During that violent conflict, America had established bases throughout the Solar System. These required an endless stream of items necessary for human existence.

While the hostilities lasted, the small outfits were vital and for that reason prospered. They hauled oxygen, food, spare parts, whisky, atomic slugs, professional women, uniforms, paper for quadruplicate reports, cigarettes, and all the other impedimenta of wartime life.

With the outbreak of peace, such companies faced a precarious, devil-take-the-hindmost type of existence.

The day that Swenson arrived had been grim even for Acme. Dovorkin, the regular dispatcher, had been fired that morning. He had succeeded in leaving the schedule in a nightmarish muddle.

And on Dovorkin's vacant desk lay the last straw—a Special Message.

Acme Interplanetary Express
147 Z Street
New York

Your atomic-converted ship Number 7 is hereby grounded at Luna

City, Moon, until demurrage bill paid. Your previous violations of Space Regulations make our action mandatory.

Planetary Commerce Commission

The Acme Board of Directors was inured to accepting the inevitable. They had heard rumors along Blaster's Alley of Swenson's reputation, which ranged from brilliance, through competence, to insanity. So they shrugged and hired him.

His first act was to order a case of beer. His second was to look at what Dovorkin had left of a Dispatch Sheet.

"Number 5 is still blasting through the astraloids. It should be free-falling. Why the hell isn't it?"

Old Mister Cerobie, Chairman of the Board, said quietly: "Before you begin your work, we would like a bit of information. What is your full name?"

"Patrick M. Swenson."

"What does the M stand for?"

"I don't know."

"Why not?"

"My mother never told me. I don't think she knows. In the name of God, why don't you send Number 3 . . ."

"What's your nationality?"

"I'm supposed to be a Swede."

"What do you mean, 'supposed'?"

"Will you open one of those beers?"

"I asked you . . ."

Swenson made a notation on the Dispatch Sheet and spun around in the swivel chair. "I was born on a *Swallow Class* ship in space between the Moon and Earth. My mother said my father was a Swede. She was Irish. I was delivered and circumcised by a rabbi who happened to be on board. The ship was of Venutian registry, but was owned by a Czechoslovakian company. Now you figure it out."

"How did you happen to come here?"

"I met Dovorkin in a bar. He told me that you were in trouble. You are. Is one of the Moulton Trust's ships at Luna City?"

"Yes."

"Then that's why you're grounded. They've got an in with the Planetary Commerce Commission. What's the demurrage?"

"Seventy-six thousand dollars."

"Can you raise it?"

"No."

Swenson glanced at the sheet. "How come Number 2 is in New York?"

"We're waiting for additional cargo. We have half a load of snuff for

Mars. And we've been promised half a load of canned goods for Luna City. It's reduced rate freight that another company can't handle."

"Dovorkin told me about the snuff. That's a starter, anyway." Swenson turned back to the Dispatch Sheet and muttered to himself: "Always a good thing to have snuff for Mars."

Mister Cerobie became strangely interested.

"Why?"

Swenson paid no attention. "What are you taking a split load for?"

"We had no choice."

"You know damn well that the broken-down old stovepipes you buy from war surplus are too slow to handle split loads. Who promised you the canned goods?"

"Lesquallan, Ltd."

"Oh, Lord!" said Swenson. "An outfit that expects lions to lie down with lambs!"

The red *ship-calling* light flashed on.

"Number 4 to dispatcher. This is Captain Elsing. Dovorkin . . ."

"Dispatcher to Number 4. Dovorkin, hell. This is Swenson. What blasts?"

"B jet just went out. Atomic slug clogged."

"How radioactive is the spout?" asked Swenson.

"Heavy."

"Have somebody who's already had a family put on armor and clean up the mess," Swenson said, "and alter course for Luna City. I'll send you the exact course in a few minutes. When you get to Luna, land beside the Moulton Trust's ship. Now stand by to record code."

Swenson reached back to Mister Cerobie. "Acme private code book."

Silently, the Chairman of the Board handed it to him. When Swenson had finished coding, he handed the original message to Mister Cerobie. The message read:

"Captain Elsing, have crew start fight with Moulton's crew. Not much incentive will be necessary. See that no real damage is done. Urgent. Will take all responsibility. Explain later. Cerobie."

"Swenson," Mister Cerobie said quietly, "you *are* insane. Tear that up."

With slow dignity, Swenson put on his coat. He stood there, smiling, and looking at Mister Cerobie. The memory of Dovorkin stalked unpleasantly through the Chairman's mind. Everything was hopeless, anyway. Better go out with a bang than a whimper.

"All right, send it," he said. "There is plenty of time to countermand—after I talk to you."

When Swenson had finished sending the coded message, he turned back to Mister Cerobie. "What's this I hear from Dovorkin about a Senator being aboard Number 7 at Luna?"

A member of the Board began: "After all . . ."

Mister Cerobie cut him off: "Your information is correct, Swenson.

A Senator has shipped with us. However, I would prefer to discuss the matter in my private office."

Swenson crossed the room to the astrographer in the calculating booth and said: "Plot the free-falling curve for Number 5 to Mars." Then he followed Mister Cerobie into the Chairman's office.

Half an hour later, they came out and Swenson went back to his desk. First he glanced at the free-falling plot. Then he snorted, called the astrographer and fired him. Next he said to Mister Cerobie: "Is that half load of snuff . . ."

"Yes, it is. You know Martians as well as I do. With their type of nose, they must get quite a sensation. I understand they go a bit berserk. That's why their government outlaws snuff as an Earth vice. However, our cargo release states that it is being sent for 'medicinal purposes.' It's no consequence to us what they use the snuff for. We're just hauling it. And I don't have to tell you how fantastic a rate we're getting."

"To hell with the canned goods part of the load," Swenson said. "Can you get a full haul of snuff?"

"Possibly. But it would cost."

"Even this outfit can afford to grease palms."

"I'll see what I can do."

"What's the Senator on the Moon for?"

"He's supposed to make a speech on Conquest Day." Mister Cerobie lit a cigar. "That's day after tomorrow," he added.

"Exactly where is this eloquence to be expounded?"

"The Senator is speaking at the dedication of the new underground recreation dome. It's just outside Luna City. They've bored a tunnel from the main dome cluster. This dedication is considered very important. Everybody in Luna will be there. It's been declared an official holiday, with all crews released. Even the maintenance and public service personnel have been cut to skeleton staffs."

"With that fiesta scheduled on our beloved satellite," said Swenson, "we won't have to worry about getting the Senator off for some time. His name's Higby, isn't it?" Mister Cerobie nodded. "Then he'll whoop it up long enough for you to get that demurrage mess straightened out."

"Unfortunately, it isn't that simple. The Senator is due for another speech on Mars. The timing is close—he only has a minimum of leeway. As you mentioned, Number 7 is grounded for demurrage. And we can't ship the Senator out on Number 4 because of the bad jet."

Swenson was silent for a long time. The beer gurgled pleasantly as he drank it. Then a bright smile—which could have been due either to inspiration or beer—spread across his face.

"If that idiot Dovorkin can be trusted," he said, "the Senator is speaking in the early afternoon, our time. Do you happen to know just when he starts yapping? And the scheduled length of the spiel?"

"I'll check it." Mister Cerobie turned to one of his assistants. Swenson took down the *Luna Data Handbook* and thumbed through it.

A moment later, the assistant handed a slip of paper to the Board Chairman.

"The Senator," Mister Cerobie said, "will speak from 1300 hours to 1500 hours."

Swenson smiled and stuck a marker in the *Luna Data Handbook.*

"Now," he said, "about this snuff. Can you have it loaded by tomorrow night?"

"I don't see how."

"Remember our agreement in the office. If we don't do something, we're through, so all we can do is lose. Leave me be and don't ask questions. I want to blast Number 2 into low Earth-orbital tomorrow night."

Mister Cerobie looked off into that nowhere which was the daily destiny of Acme. "All right," he said, "I was born a damn fool. I'll do my best to have a full load of snuff aboard—somehow—tomorrow night."

Swenson went back to his Dispatch Sheet. During the next five hours, he looked up only long enough to order another case of beer and a new astrographer.

Finally, he called Heilberg, the assistant dispatcher who was on the night shift, gave him a lecture concerning dispatching in general and the present situation in particular, promoted a date with one of the stenographers, and departed.

When Swenson came back the next morning, he was sober, ornery and disinclined to do any work. He cornered O'Toole, the labor relations man, and began talking women. O'Toole was intrigued but evasive.

"Your trouble," Swenson said, "is not with women. It's with evolution. I don't blame evolution for creating women. I blame it for abandoning the egg. Just when it had invented a reasonable method of reproduction which didn't make the female silly-looking and tie her down needlessly for nine months . . ."

"I don't think they're silly-looking."

"Maybe you don't, O'Toole, but I do. And you must admit that nine months is a hell of a long time to fool around with something that could be hatched in an incubator under automatic controls. Look at the time saving. If evolution hadn't abandoned the egg idea, half the human race wouldn't waste time being damned incubators."

"O'Toole backed away. He had never heard the legend of Swenson's egg speech.

"Don't tell me," Swenson went on, "that evolution is efficient. Are you married, O'Toole?"

"Yes, I—"

"Wouldn't you rather your wife laid an egg than—"

"I don't know," O'Toole interrupted, "but I do know that I'd like to find out what the dispatch situation is at the moment."

Swenson grabbed a piece of paper and drew a diagram.

While O'Toole was studying the diagram, someone laid a Special Message on Swenson's desk. Swenson glanced at it:

Acme Interplanetary Express
147 Z Street
New York

Your ship Number 4 is hereby grounded at Luna City, pending an investigation of a riot involving your men, and for non-payment of bill for atomic slug purification. Your Number 4 is also charged with unpaid demurrage bill.

Planetary Commerce Commission

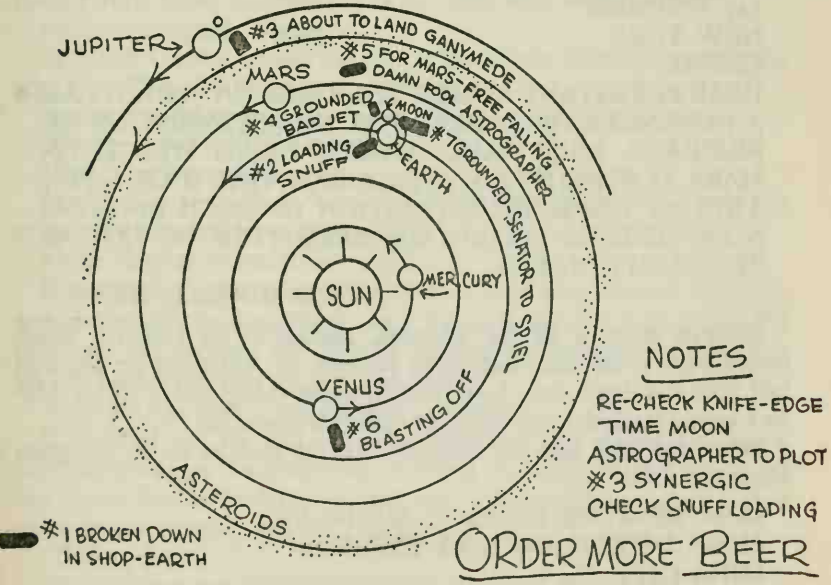
Swenson muttered: "Good!" and threw the Special Message in the wastebasket. Mister Cerobie, who had just entered the office, fished the form out and read it.

"It never rains, but it pours," he said.

"You can't stand long on one foot," Swenson answered without looking up. "Put all your troubles in one basket and then lose the basket. *Morituri te salutamus.* Have you heard my theory about the advantage of reproduction via the egg? And get me a beer."

"I will get you a beer, but if you say a word about that egg theory, I will fire you. I heard you talking to O'Toole."

"Okay. We'll forget the egg for the nonce. Did you pilfer that snuff?"



"It's being loaded. And it cost Acme—"

"Did you expect it would fall like manna from heaven?" Swenson flipped the switch of the intercom to Acme's launching area. "Give me Number 2. Captain Wilkins."

"What are you going to do?" Mister Cerobie asked.

"Don't you remember what I told you yesterday? Where's that beer?"

Mister Cerobie smiled, a weary, dogged smile, the smile of a man who had bet on drawing to a belly straight.

"Captain Wilkins," came over the intercom, "calling Swenson, dispatcher, for orders."

"Blast as soon as loaded for low altitude Earth-orbital." Swenson was silent a moment, then: "Hell, don't you know the plot? All right, I'll give it to you. Full jets, two minutes, azimuth . . ."

Mister Cerobie interrupted quietly: "Swenson, don't you think you'd better check with the astrographer?"

Turning off the intercom, Swenson spun in his chair. "Any decent dispatcher knows that one by heart. So maybe I'm wrong. Then Number 2 will pile up on either the Moon or the Earth. If that happens, you can collect the insurance and get out of this mess." He flipped on the intercom switch. "Sorry, Captain Wilkins, brass interference. As I was saying, azimuth . . ."

Mister Cerobie made no effort to continue the conversation. He was reading an astrogram, which had just been handed to him.

ACME INTERPLANETARY EXPRESS
147 Z STREET
NEW YORK
EARTH
HEAR PERSISTENT RUMOR YOUR SHIP ON WHICH I AM A PASSENGER HELD HERE FOR NON-PAYMENT OF DEMURRAGE. MUST MAKE WORLD CRISIS SPEECH ON MARS AS SCHEDULED. ASTROGRAM TRUTH OF SITUATION AT ONCE. INVESTIGATION OF SUCH MATTERS NOW PENDING BEFORE SUBCOMMITTEE. DO NOT ASTROGRAM COLLECT.

SEN. HIRAM C. HIGBY

Swenson snapped off the intercom, glanced at his Dispatch Sheet, leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes. He was silent for the next half hour and drank three beers, looking either thoughtful or asleep. Mister Cerobie smoked a cigar until it burned his mustache.

When the third beer was finished, Swenson reached for an astrogram blank and wrote:

HON. SENATOR HIRAM C. HIGBY ESQ.
ACME INTERPLANETARY EXPRESS
LUNA CITY

RUMOR RE UNPAID DEMURRAGE UTTERLY UNFOUNDED. INFORMATION HERE THAT RUMOR STARTED BY YOUR OPPOSITION. HAVE VITAL NEW DATA FOR YOUR LUNA CITY SPEECH. WILL SEND SPEECH INSERT AT ONCE.

JAMES CEROBIE

Mister Cerobie, who had been reading over Swenson's shoulder, said: "You know that demurrage rumor is true."

"If things don't work out and we have any trouble, you can say you hadn't heard about the demurrage. By the way, can you write an insert to a political speech?"

"I suppose so. I've lied before."

"Make sure it will take ten minutes to deliver—even talking fast—which Senators don't usually do."

"What," inquired Mister Cerobie, "shall I write about?"

"You know that scandal Senator Higby's opposition just got involved in. That business about slave labor exploitation on Venus. The story broke this morning. Get in touch with my friend Max Zempky on *Telenews* and have him give you some inside details. It doesn't matter if they're important or not. The Senator will grab anything that might pep up his speech. Besides, he's probably been having a large time in Luna City and hasn't heard about this morning's story."

Mister Cerobie executed a sweeping bow. "Yes, sir. And if this thing doesn't work, I told you yesterday in my office what would happen."

Swenson shrugged. "Kismet."

As Mister Cerobie opened the door to his private office, Swenson called after him: "Where's this outfit's attorney?"

"In the Board Room."

"Find him and send him in here."

Mister Cerobie nodded.

"And," Swenson added, "be damned sure that speech insert will run at least ten minutes. More, if possible."

Mister Cerobie slammed the door.

Five minutes later, slim, soft-spoken Van Euing, Acme's attorney, coughed behind the dispatcher's chair. Swenson swiveled from coding the astrogram and dropped his cigarette. "What the hell—oh, you. Lawyers are like policemen—they sneak up on people."

"How did you know I was the firm's attorney?"

"I watched you try that unfair-trade-practice suit against Lesquallan Ltd. two years ago. It was snowing outside. I was broke and the courtroom was warm. You should have won the case. Some of their evidence looked phony to me. Anyway, you did a good job."

"Thank you."

"Did you ever stop to think about the advantage of the egg—"

"Mister Cerobie said you wished to speak to me."

"That's right. I want you to draw up a something-or-other—you know what I mean—grounding Moulton Trust's ship on the Moon until this fight hassle is settled."

"You mean you wish me to prepare a restraining order?"

"Restrain, yeah! And restrain them as long as you can. I wish you could restrain them forever. This solar system would be a better place."

"On what grounds am I to base my order?"

"Claim they started the fight and our crew's so bashed up that we haven't enough able men to blast off."

"But I'm afraid we can't prove that."

"And what's it going to cost us to try? You're on retainer. The total bill for said restraining order will be only the price of some legal paper and the services of a notary. The steno's hired by the month, like you."

Van Euing looked puzzled. "What good will it do?"

"You know how long it takes courts to do anything. Before your order is tossed out, Moulton will have been grounded for a week."

Van Euing lit his pipe. "In legal parlance, it is something irregular, which, being translated, means it's a slick trick."

"All it's going to cost *you* is being half an hour late to lunch."

Van Euing puffed a moment on his pipe and said: "Because of your audacity, Swenson, and furthermore, because you'll be fired tomorrow, I'll prepare the restraining order."

Swenson put out his hand and his blunt fingers closed around Van Euing's delicate ones.

When Van Euing had gone, Swenson returned to coding the astrogram. He checked the form twice and sent it.

Then he turned over his desk to an apprentice dispatcher, left orders to be called if anything broke down, and went out to lunch.

It was 2:30 P.M. when news of the restraining order arrived in the quiet, streamlined offices of the Moulton Trust. Two minutes later, the offices were still streamlined, but not quiet.

The three major stockholders of the great organization, N. Rovance, F. K. Esrov, and Cecil Neinfort-Whritings, formed a tiny huddle at one end of the long conference table. Esrov was waving a copy of the order.

"Gentlemen, we can consider this nothing but an outrage!"

"Blackmail, really!" It was Neinfort-Whritings's lisping voice.

"Whatever it is, this sort of nonsense must be stopped at the beginning. It might set a precedent."

"May I suggest," Rovance broke in, "that, as the matter of precedent is sure to arise, we take no action without first consulting Lesquallan Ltd."

"An excellent idea," Esrov nodded. He switched on the intercom to his first secretary. "Connect me with Lesquallan Ltd. I want to speak with Novell Lesquallan. Inform him that it is urgent."

"He just entered our office." The voice that came from the intercom carried the slightest trace of surprise. "He said he desired to discuss something about canned goods and snuff. I shall send him in at once."

Rovance turned to Neinfort-Whritings. "I fear that old Cerobie is becoming senile. Apparently he has lost his mind."

"But really, did he ever have one?"

Nobody laughed. Esrov slammed the restraining order on the conference table and stood up. "Gentlemen, what shall we do concerning—"

"Yes, gentlemen, that is just what I want to know."

Three heads pivoted. Novell Lesquallan, sole owner of Lesquallan Ltd., stood in the doorway. He was a broad, ruddy-faced man with a voice trained to basso interruptions.

"I understand, Mr. Lesquallan," Esrov said, "that you have a matter to discuss with us."

"Yes! Sit down, F.K. We have some talking to do—about that bankrupt, dishonest Acme Interplanetary Express."

"Quite a coincidence," Neinfort-Whritings murmured.

"You got trouble with that outfit, too? That settles it. They've cluttered up the orderly progress of free enterprise long enough. Out they go."

Novell Lesquallan swiftly read the document and bellowed an unintelligible remark.

"Something, quite," Neinfort-Whritings agreed.

Lesquallan got his voice under control. "What action do you intend to take?"

"We hadn't decided," Rovance answered. "We received the order only a few minutes ago."

"Before we form our plans," Esrov said, "we would like some information about your problems with Acme. We understand it involves canned goods and snuff."

"Yes, those damned. . . . At the last minute, they turned down a small load of canned goods for Luna that we'd been decent enough to give them at reduced rates. They can't get away with that kind of thing long. But that's just the beginning. They got hold of the contract and permit to haul a consignment of medicinal snuff to Mars. We had already arranged for that cargo. You know that snuff situation. Through certain contacts, we have been able—perfectly legally—to have permits issued. That customs man must have taken a double—"

"We understand," Rovance broke in. "We have had occasion to make similar arrangements. The rates—and other inducements—are extremely satisfactory."

"Well, gentlemen," Lesquallan demanded, "what are we going to do about this unprecedented situation?"

"I suggest," Neinfort-Whritings said, "that we have our legal staffs meet in joint session. We should impress on them that the quashing of

this restraining order is urgent. Perhaps we should consider debts owed us by the judiciary we helped elect."

"An excellent idea," Lesquallan declared. "I will take care of that part of it myself, personally."

"As to the snuff matter," Esrov said, "I think we should emphasize to our mutual contact that he should be more discriminating in issuing permits."

"That's all right for now," Lesquallan snapped. "But he's done with, too. I'll see to it that he's replaced."

"As to the canned goods situation," Rovance said, "it seems to me that we should have a subsidiary company to handle our excess cargoes—at reduced rates, of course. It shouldn't cost too much to pick up one of the less financially secure companies—such as Acme."

Esrov nodded. "An excellent idea."

"I agree," Lesquallan said and sat down. "But first we must dispose of today's damned annoyances. I suggest that we outline a plan for immediate action."

"To begin with," Esrov reminded him, "we must deal with the restraining order."

When Swenson came back from lunch, he was not as sober and thus in a better mood. Mister Cerobie's insert to the Senator's speech was on his desk. Swenson read the first few lines:

> As a further indication of the methods, devices, malfeasances, and corrupt practices employed, used, and sustained by those with whom you have called upon me to negotiate in the highest tribunal in Washington, let me cite the following information which I have just received. Although this information is top-drawer, restricted and highly secret, I was able to obtain it through certain channels which, as a man of honor, I must leave undisclosed.
>
> The right of all creatures to be free is a fundamental, an inviolable, right and yet on Venus . . .

Swenson said to himself: "Mister Cerobie is in the wrong business," and started coding the insert. He had almost finished when the ship-calling light flashed red.

"Number 5 to Dispatcher. Captain Verbold speaking."

"Dispatcher to Number 5. This is Swenson. Go ahead."

"I'm afraid you can't help me. May I speak to Mister Cerobie?"

"He's out to lunch."

"This matter is serious. I am faced with what amounts to mutiny."

"Sorry, but I got troubles, too. Maybe I can find Mister Cerobie, maybe I can't. Why don't you tell me your grief?"

Captain Verbold hesitated. "It's something I've been expecting. The crew has stated that they will leave the ship at Mars." Captain Verbold's next sentence was pronounced word by word in code. "I even have private

information that there is a plot to take over the ship and blast directly to Earth, where the crew feel their case can be more justly presented."

"What are they squawking about?"

"Everything. Wages have not been paid for six months. Poor radiation shielding. Food not up to standard. You know the story."

"It's not the first time I've heard it."

"What am I to do?"

"First, read them section 942 in your copy of *Space Regulations*," said Swenson. "If they divert ship from Mars without your permission, it's mutiny. That means the neutron death chamber or, if they are very lucky, life sentences to the Luna Penal Colony. Get them all together and read it to them. You're free-falling now, so even the jetters won't have to be on duty."

"But if I could talk to Mister Cerobie–"

"I've already told you I don't know where the hell he is. He couldn't do you any good, anyway. Didn't you ever read *Space Regulations*? Section 19: 'The captain of a ship in flight is *solely responsible* for the maintenance of discipline and his orders cannot be changed or overruled'."

"Swenson, you said a moment ago that this was your first suggestion. I presume, therefore, that you have others."

"I have two others." Swenson paused long enough for a brief study of his Master Ship Location Chart, which he had just brought up to date. The chart showed the position of all ships at the moment in space. "There's a patrol cruiser loaded with gendarmes three million miles behind you on a course paralleling yours. It's one of the new Arrow Class and if they blast full, they can catch you in ten hours. Mention to the crew that you could notify the police boys and have them pick you up and escort you to Mars."

"What is the patrol ship's number and call letters?"

"Arrow–British–Earth–Number 96. Call letters MMXAH."

"Thanks. If things get too bad, I might take advantage of our valiant guarders of the spaceways. All right, you said you had three suggestions. What's the third?"

"Some goons on a Moulton Trust ship, parked beside our Number 2 on the Moon, started a fight and beat up our boys. We're about to sue Moulton for plenty. Tell your crew about it and suggest that if they behave, we'll cut them in on the proceeds from the suit, in addition to paying their wages as soon as a snuff cargo that I had to send into orbital gets to Mars."

"On whose authority am I to make such a statement?"

"Swenson's. You don't need any other, do you? I know most of the boys on your mobile junkyard. They trust me, so they'll trust you. You have my word that Cerobie will go for the idea."

"You talk to Cerobie and let me know what happens. Meanwhile, I'll think over your suggestions."

The ship-calling light blinked off and Swenson went back to coding the speech insert.

As he was finishing, O'Toole came in.

Swenson looked up. "O'Toole, sure and it's one hell of a job you're doing. You've got me in a fight with myself. My Swedish half wants to ignore you and my Irish half wants to punch you in the nose. You're supposed to handle labor relations. And I just received a message from Captain Verbold of Number 5 that his crew is about to mutiny."

"Mother of God, what can I do?" cried O'Toole. "This outfit's so broke, it doesn't have enough money to pay the filing fee for bankruptcy."

"In the face of adversity, you should spit."

"Who are you quoting?"

"Me."

"Look, Swenson, I'm supposed to supervise labor relations, sure. Labor is something you hire. That's done by paying wages—on time."

"At least you should have brains enough to understand the advantage of the egg."

"What?" asked O'Toole blankly.

"I've already explained it to you. Apparently it didn't get past your hair. I shall therefore make a second attempt. Do you understand the principle of the egg?"

"I don't—"

"Of course not. You never stopped to analyze it. You just assumed that because human beings are born the way they are, it is the best method. How much pain and trouble does a hen have laying an egg? Does she—"

"Getting back to Number 5," O'Toole said firmly, "what did Captain Verbold—"

"Consider the advantage of the egg from another angle, O'Toole. Let's say your wife lays an egg and, at the moment, you don't have money enough to support another child. All you would have to do is put the egg in cold storage until your ship comes in. Then you can take the egg out and incubate it. Instead of being—"

The click of the latch as O'Toole closed the door caused Swenson to spin in his chair. Tossing his pencil on the Dispatch Sheet, he put on his coat and went home.

When the dispatcher for Acme Interplanetary Express arrived at the office the following morning, a Special Message lay in sublime isolation on his desk. Swenson opened a beer and read the message.

Board of Directors
Acme Interplanetary Express
Gentlemen:

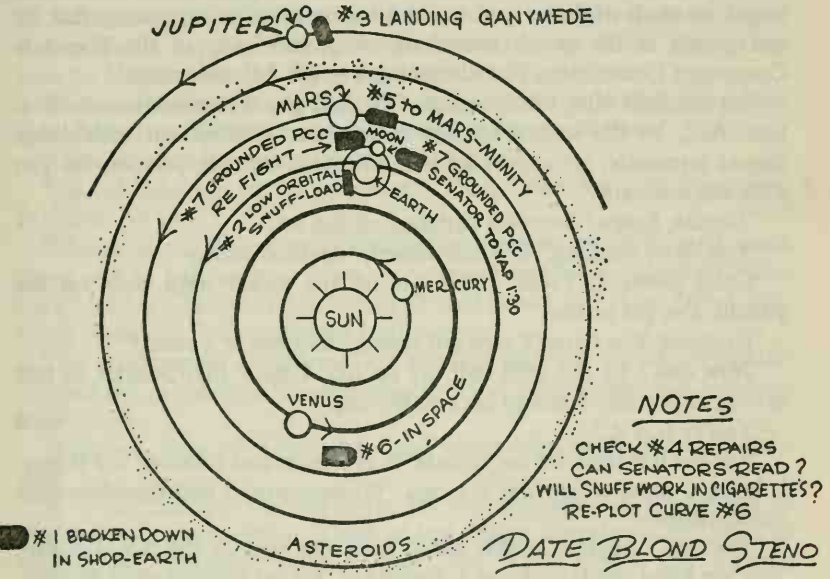
Your restraining order concerning our ship at Luna City can only be considered as representing a warped and intolerable concept of justice. We will take every legal action available to us.

Moreover, your action in refusing, without notice, a load which we were so kind as to offer you and your immoral dealings in contraband snuff force us to sever all commercial relations with your organization.

We are taking appropriate action with the Planetary Commerce Commission.

Yours sincerely,
Moulton Trust
Lesquallan Ltd.

Swenson was smiling cherubically and bringing his Master Chart up to date when O'Toole came in.



"Swenson, did you have eggs for breakfast? And how goes with the dispatch?"

Carefully noting the last change of ship position on the Master Chart, Swenson turned to O'Toole.

"Things are like so," he said, and drew a diagram.

While O'Toole was studying the diagram, Swenson placed a call to Moulton Trust. "Give me Esrov. Yes, Esrov himself. This is Swenson, Acme Interplanetary. If Esrov doesn't want to talk to me, jets to him, but I think I have some information he can use."

"Will you please hold on, Mr. Swenson? I will convey your message."

Swenson looked at O'Toole for a moment in silence. "No, I don't like eggs for eating. My theory concerns another aspect—"

"I know," said O'Toole resignedly.

Esrov's urbane voice came from the desk speaker. "Mr. Swenson, you have some information for us?"

"Yes, Esrov. I've just seen your message to our Board and I want you to know that I can certainly understand your position. I could not prevent the restraining order. However, I have a suggestion as to what you can do about it."

"We are doing everything we can."

"Didn't you support Senator Higby for re-election last year? Well, he has shipped with us on an inspection tour of planetary outposts. Right now, he's on the Moon and will speak at 1:30 this afternoon at the official opening of the new Recreation Center. It occurred to me that it might be worthwhile for you to send him a message suggesting that he incorporate in his speech something about the laxity of the Planetary Commerce Commission that allowed you to get into this mess."

"An excellent idea, Mr. Swenson. We shall give it immediate consideration. And, by the way, if for any reason your employment with Acme should terminate, we should be able to find a suitable position for you with our company."

"Thanks, Esrov." Swenson switched off the set.

"You dirty, stinking," O'Toole blared, "doublecrossing—"

"Calm down, O'Toole. Don't get off the rocket until she's on the ground. I've got reasons."

"Reasons? You haven't even got *reason!* And you're a crook!"

"Now don't let my Irish half get on top. I want that Senator to talk as long as possible. Let's go back to the egg."

"You've laid it."

"For the last time, let me explain. If evolution had followed my theory, I, being a man, would not lay eggs. Women would and therefore they would escape—"

"Swenson," Mister Cerobie called from the door of the Board Room, "you are hired—tentatively—as a dispatcher, not an egg-evolution theorist. Now come in here. The Board wants to talk to you."

Swenson jerked the diagram out of O'Toole's hand and followed Cerobie.

Ten minutes later, he came out of the Board Room, saying: "Gentlemen, the Senator speaks at 1:30 this afternoon. At 6:00 either fire me, crucify me and make me drink boiled beer alone, or give me a raise."

The clock on the wall over the dispatcher's desk showed 2:59 when Swenson called Acme's Luna City Terminal. "Dispatcher to Numbers 7 and 4, have crew stand by to blast off in exactly 15 minutes. I don't give a damn about regulations or the PCC. This is an order from your company. It must be obeyed. Number 7 will follow course as originally

planned—destination Mars. Number 4 will blast for Earth, curve to be given in space."

Fifteen minutes later, the dispatcher's office at Acme Interplanetary Express was quieter than an abandoned and forgotten tomb. The Board of Directors stood silently in a semi-circle behind Swenson. Every employee, even the stenographers, were jammed into the frowsy room.

As the hand of the clock sliced off the last second of the 15 minutes, Swenson looked over his shoulder—and laughed, a great, resounding laugh. Then he flicked the switch and picked up the microphone.

"Swenson dispatcher to 7 and 4. Blast! Over. Swenson dispatcher to 4 and 7. Blast!"

Suddenly the silent room was filled with the roar of the jets as they thundered in the imaginations of the men and women crowded around the dispatcher's desk. The tension broke as almost a sob of gladness. What if it proved a hopeless dream, a mere stalling of inevitable ruin? They were no longer grounded. They were in space.

To those in the room, it seemed only an instant until the ship-calling light flashed on. "Number 7 to dispatcher. In space. All clear."

"Dispatcher to Number 7, steady as she goes."

The red light was off for a moment. Then: "Number 4 to dispatcher. In space. All clear."

"Dispatcher to Number 4. Temporary curve A 17. Will send exact curve plot in half an hour." Swenson turned to the astrographer. "Give me a plot for Chicago. I don't want to land her in this state. Just a matter of prudence. She's registered in this state."

The astrographer shouldered his way through the crowd. When he reached the calculators, his swift fingers began pushing buttons. Swenson leaned back.

"Mischief, thou art a'space," he said. "Now take whatever course thou wilt."

At 3:30, Swenson reached again for the microphone. "Dispatcher to Number 2. You are circling Earth at low orbital. Decelerate and drop to stratosphere. Maintain position over New York. Curve and blasting data . . ."

At 4:00, he called Max Zempky at *Telenews*. "Anything frying at Luna?"

"My God, yes! Senator Higby yapped sixteen minutes overtime and the shadow knife-edge caught everybody with their air tanks down. The control crews were listening to the speech and there wasn't anybody left to switch over the heating-cooling system. You've been to the Moon, so you know what happens. When day changes to night and you haven't got any atmosphere, the temperature drops from boiling to practically absolute zero. Sure, the automatic controls worked, but there wasn't any crew to adjust and service the heaters and coolers. It's a mess. Say, haven't you got a ship or two up there?"

"I got 'em out in time."

"Well, Moulton didn't. Their ship's been considerably damaged."

"Thanks, Max. Let me know if anything else breaks."

While Swenson had been talking, two Special Messages and an astrogram had been laid on his desk. He first read one of the Special Messages.

Acme Interplanetary Express
147 Z Street
New York
Gentlemen:

We are holding you responsible for the damage to our ship Number 57, now on the Moon. The captain of your ship should have known the potential danger and warned Senator Higby of the time factor.

We will contact the PCC at once.

F. K. Esrov
Moulton Trust

Swenson scribbled an answer and handed it to an assistant.

Moulton Trust

Nuts, Esrov. You've got to think up something better than that. We have no control over public officials, except during flight. Bellyache all you want to the PCC.

Sedately,
Swenson

The astrogram was from Senator Hiram C. Higby:

MY BEING STRANDED ON MOON UNMITIGATED AND UNPARALLELED OUTRAGE. MUST SPEAK AS SCHEDULED ON MARS. FIND ME TRANSPORTATION. WILL DEAL LATER WITH YOUR COMPANY CONCERNING INFAMOUS TREATMENT.

SEN. HIRAM
C. HIGBY

Swenson replied:

UNFORTUNATE CIRCUMSTANCE UNAVOIDABLE. YOUR SPEECH MAGNIFICENT. WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO SECURE IMMEDIATE TRANSPORTATION TO MARS.

SWENSON

The second Special Message was from the PCC and asked with crisp and blunt formality why two Acme ships, which had been officially grounded by the Commission, had blasted off the Moon.

In answer, Swenson was mild and apologetic. What else could he have done? Surely the Commission must understand that his first duty was

to save his ships from damage. He had been informed by his captains that the shadow knife-edge was almost due, and there was no possibility of the control crews servicing the temperature-change compensators in time. It was an emergency. The matter of the grounding could be settled later.

When his answer was finished, he coded it, along with the Special Message from Moulton Trust, the astrogram from Senator Higby, and his replies. Finally, he coded the Special Message from PCC.

Then he called Number 5.

"Number 5 to dispatcher. This is Verbold. What goes on now?"

"You tell me. Dwelleth thy household in peace?"

"For the moment."

"Have you followed my instructions?"

"In general, yes."

"Did your crew hear Senator Higby's speech?"

"Most of them. What else is there to do in this rat-trap?"

"I could think of a lot of things. But as long as the crew heard the Honorable's spiel, that's all that matters. Do you know about the little affair half an hour ago at Luna City?"

"No."

"Check your news recorder. Have the item broadcast to the crew. Then decode the sequence of messages I'm about to send and read them—at your discretion—to the men. Stand by to record code."

When he had finished, Swenson leaned back and opened a beer. "All we can do now is wait. But I'd give my grandmother's immortal soul, if the old shrew had one, to be in the sacred sanctum of Moulton Trust."

Lesquallan sat on the edge of the long table in Moulton's Board Room. He spoke slowly and for once his voice was low:

"Esrov, did you or did you not suggest to our Senator Higby that he lengthen his speech on the Moon to include certain new information? And did that information involve my company along with yours?"

"Mr. Lesquallan, the matter concerns only a minor aspect of policy," said Esrov placatingly.

"Minor aspect of policy, hell! It concerns business. Look what happened at Luna. And you let us get publicly involved in it. Such matters must never be handled openly."

Esrov did not answer.

"Did you send such a message, Rovance?" Rovance shook his head. Lesquallan turned to Neinfort-Whritings. "Did you?"

"No, Lesquallan." Neinfort-Whritings gently pulled a Special-Message form from beneath Esrov's folded hands as they lay on the gleaming conference table.

Lesquallan swung back to Esrov. "Did *you* send it?"

Esrov looked down at his folded hands. At last he said quietly: "Yes, I sent a message to the Senator—in our mutual interests."

"Was it your own idea? Or did someone else suggest it?"

"The basic thought came from a most unexpected source. It was, we might say, one of those happy breaks of industry. The dispatcher at Acme had the sense to cooperate with us. He gave me certain otherwise unavailable information, and—"

"What was his name?"

"I don't—oh, yes, it was Swenson."

"You . . . you fool . . . *idiot!*"

Neinfort-Whritings handed Lesquallan the Special Message he had taken from Esrov. It was the one from Swenson, which began: "Nuts, Esrov."

Lesquallan read the message. Then he said slowly: "I've dealt with that clown Swenson before—over minor matters. I never thought he had that much brains." He looked at Esrov. "Or insight. Swenson's a smart man. Therefore, he must be eliminated."

"I still maintain," Rovance said, "that the basis of the matter is the strangling of free enterprise."

"I agree," said Lesquallan. "What right has Acme to interfere with free enterprise? They haven't a dollar to our million."

"What shall we do?" Neinfort-Whritings murmured.

"Follow Swenson's suggestion. We're going to the PCC—and we're going to our top contacts. They owe us plenty."

"Shall we dictate a memo?" Esrov put in.

"Call the PCC," Lesquallan ordered. "We're not dictating anything. And we're not sending any messages to anybody. Let the PCC send them!"

No employee of Acme Interplanetary Express had left the smoke-dense office when the ship-calling light went on: "Number 5 to Swenson. Verbold speaking."

"Dispatcher to Number 5. Go ahead."

"Uproar under control. I followed your instructions. A crew that's laughing won't mutiny. The crew sends thanks and their most pious wishes for the distress of Moulton. The men expect shares of the proceeds, if any, in the lawsuit. But they insist on being paid on Mars."

"They will be, Captain Verbold. Now I've got to keep this beam clear. Good luck." Swenson turned to Mister Cerobie. "I presume you can at least find enough cash for the back pay?"

Mister Cerobie did not answer. He was staring at a Special Message which had just been handed to him. He dropped it on Swenson's desk.

Acme Interplanetary Express
147 Z Street
New York

Because of your violation of Space Regulations and unprecedented effrontery, your ships Numbers 7 and 4 are hereby ordered to return

to the Moon. There they will be impounded. A police patrol escort has been dispatched to insure your compliance with our order.

Planetary Commerce Commission

Swenson read the message and looked up.

"Well?" asked Mister Cerobie.

The murmur of voices died. The dispatcher's office of Acme Interplanetary Express was a silent, isolated world. Swenson wrote an astrogram and handed it to the Chairman of the Board.

"Shall I code it?"

Mister Cerobie read the astrogram. He read it a second time and his perplexity vanished.

"But will it work?" he asked.

Swenson shrugged. "It ought to. Remember what happened when Solar System Freight lost that chemical load? We're stratosphering over New York. Anyway, he wouldn't dare take the chance. Shall I code it, Mister Cerobie?"

"Absolutely!"

The men and women of Acme crowded and squirmed for a look at the astrogram on Swenson's desk. O'Toole realized first and yelled. Slowly, as understanding came, other voices took it up, until the office was a chaos of sound. Bottles appeared from nowhere. O'Toole raised one of them: "Sure and St. Patrick would have loved it!"

Calmly, Swenson coded:

SENATOR HIRAM C. HIGBY
ACME INTERPLANETARY EXPRESS
LUNA CITY
ONLY TRANSPORTATION AVAILABLE OUR SHIP NOW IN EARTH STRATOSPHERE ABOVE NEW YORK WITH CARGO SNUFF. WILL DISPATCH THIS SHIP SPECIAL TO MOON FOR YOUR DISPOSAL. HOWEVER MUST JETTISON CARGO TO LIGHTEN SHIP. WILL NOTIFY AIR POLLUTION AND PCC. ONLY ALTERNATIVE COMPLETE CLEARANCE BY PCC OUR SHIPS NUMBERS 7 AND 4. WILL THEN DISPATCH ONE OF THEM TO PICK YOU UP. ORDER TO JETTISON WILL BE GIVEN IN HALF AN HOUR UNLESS WE RECEIVE WORD FROM YOU. HAVE YOU ANY INFLUENCE WITH THE PCC? SEND REACTION AT ONCE. URGENCY OBVIOUS.

SWENSON

The dispatcher for Acme said to himself: "I doubt very seriously if any sane Senator up for re-election would want the official records to show that, because he talked too long on the Moon, a cargo of snuff was dumped

over New York. Sneezing voters cannot see candidate's name on ballot."

Twenty minutes later, the replying astrogram was in Swenson's hand.

ACME INTERPLANETARY EXPRESS
147 Z STREET
NEW YORK
EARTH
ORDER CLEARING YOUR SHIPS 7 AND 4 APPROVED BY PCC. HAVE SHIP IMMEDIATELY REVERSE COURSE AND PICK ME UP. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES JETTISON SNUFF. SEND FURTHER INFORMATION CONCERNING SLAVE LABOR EXPLOITATION VENUS FOR INCLUSION IN MY FORTHCOMING MARS SPEECH. HAVE SPEECH INSERT IN SAME FORM AS BEFORE.
SENATOR HIRAM C. HIGBY

"And that, Mister Cerobie," said Swenson, "is how you slide out of a jam. You'll get enough cash for that snuff haul to Mars to pay the crew of Number 5 when she lands there. And you'll have enough left over to pay the demurrage and repair charges at Luna. Now open me a beer."

Mister Cerobie opened the beer wearily.

"You're fired, Swenson," he said. "I'll be damned if I'll write another speech or be your bartender."

Swenson drank and smiled.

The ship-calling light flashed red. "Number 3 to dispatcher. This is Captain Marwovan. Compartment holed by meteorite. Cannot land on Ganymede until we make repairs. Send me the orbital curve so we can circle until the hole is patched. And tell Mister Cerobie that the crew is complaining about back pay."

Transferring the beer to his other hand, Swenson grabbed the microphone. "Dispatcher to Number 3. . . ."

THING

by Ivan Janvier

Gordon Furey sat at his office desk, staring out over the harbor. The window was not a window—it was a flush-transmission TV transceiver—and the workmen clustered around the Statue of Liberty, sparking their cutting torches, were swathed from head to foot in the dull gray cloth officially known as AntiRad.

A corner of Furey's mouth jabbed upward. In the City of New York, even Liberty was dangerously radioactive. Liberty was about to be cut up and towed out to sea, there to sink and be lost in the cold gray regions where the lonely anglerfish would light her way to the bottom.

The other corner of his mouth quirked upward, and suddenly he was smiling at himself for confusing thing and symbol. The symbol was lost. The thing remained, and, in time, would find a new symbol. Meanwhile it was up to him to keep the inner, enduring reality safe.

Don Garan cleared his throat. From his seat, at the other end of the desk and opposite Furey, he could not see the bright waters of the harbor.

"I have the report on Outlaw," he reminded his companion.

Furey picked up the typewritten sheets with interest. "Outlaw," he mused. "Interesting name he's picked for himself. Sense of humor, do you suppose?"

His gaze was intent.

Garan shrugged, his lean, hawkish face unconcerned. He was some years younger than Furey. "You'd think he'd be above human emotion."

Furey smiled. "Beyond, perhaps, but not above. Don't get the idea we're dealing with some legendary Overman, Don. He doesn't have to be above the flesh. He's not out to prove how much better he is. He *knows* he's better, and secure in that knowledge, he can relax. It's we who have to discipline ourselves so rigidly."

Garan stirred uncomfortably.

There was a buzz from the interoffice phone. Furey snapped the switch over. "Yes?"

"Mr. Henneken to see you, sir," the receptionist's voice said.

Garan raised an eyebrow. "That was fast."

Furey grinned wryly. "The power of the press. All right, Cissie, tell him to come in."

He switched off and rapidly pulled the significant pages out of the report. Slipping them into his desk drawer, he rearranged the remaining pages into the orderly semblance of a complete report. When Henneken came in, he and Garan were ready for him.

Henneken had not as yet grown fat and heavy with the weight of his power. He was still too young for that. His newspaper column had achieved national prominence before cynicism could strip away his hail-fellow-well-met casualness, and a kind of boyish charm which was at least four-fifths sincere.

"How are you, Henny?" Furey greeted him.

Henneken grinned and winked at Furey and Garan in turn. "So-so," he said. "I hear you've got a superman by the tail."

Garan turned visibly white. But Furey merely grimaced slightly as he rose and drew up a chair for the smiling young newspaperman.

"Just about," he said. "Is that in your column for today?"

Henneken sat down and carefully uptilted his brief case. "Nope. And it won't be, no matter what you may choose to tell me." He settled back in his chair, crossed his ankles, and, staring blankly up at the ceiling, began to dictate:

"Dateline open:

"Mr. and Mrs. America, today your columnist is privileged to reveal that the United States has, for many months, been in possession of a secret so valuable, so important in our fight for peace and prosperity, that your columnist, though involved in the program from the very first, has not been permitted, until now, to bring you this important information."

Henneken grinned blandly. "Get the drift?"

Furey chuckled. "You mean you'd like us to give you every scrap of information we have—now, and as we gather it. In return, you'll keep mum until we tell you—before anyone else has a chance to get on the inside track—that it's all right to give the public a serious jolt."

Henneken nodded and described a box with his hands in the air. "That's about the size of it."

"Now, wait a minute!" Garan broke in excitedly. "All he's got is the bare fact that we've found Outlaw. He's trying to trade a lucky-break tipoff for a complete knockdown on the case. Why should we give it to him?"

Henneken arched an eyebrow at Garan.

Furey shook his head in embarrassment. "Look, Don," he explained gently, "if Henny wanted to, he could dig out all this stuff for himself. How do you suppose he found out about it in the first place? Fortunately

Henny's gentleman enough to come and tell us beforehand—and to offer his cooperation in return for ours."

"Sorry," Garan grunted. "My mistake."

Henneken waved a hand. "*De nada.* Think nothing of it."

Furey waved at the report on his desk, making up for Garan's outburst as smoothly as possible.

"Well, there it is. All of it. Marvin Gorcey was born in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, in nineteen forty-three. Normal childhood, as far as we know. We've called for his school psychiatrist's records on him, if any, but so far we've had no luck. Woonsocket got hit pretty hard. We have got various fringe reports—old friends, family doctor, three teachers and one scoutmaster. None of them ever noticed anything unusual about him. The concensus, as a matter of fact, indicates that he was considered pretty dumb.

"Normal adolescence—and this we *do* know. He went to high school in Providence, and the records were kept safe in accordance with the Diversification of Records and Safekeeping Act of Fifty-seven. The psychiatric concensus is that he was normal, if pretty dumb. There are references to a personality block, some repression, and occasional spasms of guilt—but nothing out of the ordinary, for Providence or anywhere else.

"Recommended therapy was noted, but never instituted—a standard operating procedure at the time. Who was going to appropriate money for a statewide therapeutic program? Besides, he was getting along fine as he was. He and several million other lads exactly like him.

"Normal post-adolescence, period. He married the gal from his Civics class, voted a straight party ticket, worked as a shipping clerk in a shoe factory, and was a member of the Elks in good standing. A solid, substantial citizen, still coming up in the world. You don't need an IQ of more than a hundred to be a good member of your community, and brains aren't as useful as experience, sometimes."

Furey looked up. "What it boils down to is this: before the war, Marvin Gorcey exhibited absolutely no signs of the mental ability he now displays. He certainly did not have enough imagination to even dream of changing his name to Eugene Outlaw. I doubt very much if he even knew what 'Eugene' meant. Even if he did, there was no reason for him to feel so different from humanity as to label the fact."

Henneken nodded. "But now, all of a sudden, he becomes a superman. When did it start?"

"With the war. He was caught on the fringe of the Providence bomb. His family, his factory, his lodge, and most of his friends were wiped out immediately. To all intents and purposes, he was a man with no past, and a problematical future. He suffered some superficial head burns, which cleared up in a few weeks without complications.

"He was released from the hospital, issued a ration card and twenty dollars in Federal scrip, and allowed to return to New England. He

promptly disappeared. Two years ago, we discovered that every Governmental agency, from the local level on up, that ever came into contact with Eugene Outlaw was operating for his benefit.

"He wasn't greedy, and he was not a paranoid. He didn't keep anyone from handling the problems of other people in a normal and beneficial manner. They just took special care of him, on the side. He gets extra rations, and has a car, a house, an excellent job at high pay. He gets no parking tickets, pays no taxes, and goes to football games free."

Henneken nodded again. "What about those head burns?"

"We don't know. Radioactivity does not induce mutation in the subject exposed—except on the cellular level. In other words, he may get cancer, or lose the ability to manufacture red cells in his bone marrow. But there's only a slight chance that the change in the gene structure, if any, will produce a viable superior mutation in the next generation. It's been six years since the war, and we don't have any super-babies yet. We don't have very many monsters, either.

"In any case, Outlaw doesn't qualify. The only thing we can deduce is that the radioactivity damaged his brain, and that, by lucky accident, the cells that were killed were the ones that kept him stupid. You see what I mean? Assuming for a moment that anyone could be a superman if there wasn't something in his brain holding him back, then Outlaw—or Gorcey, whichever you prefer—hit the radioactive jackpot."

Henneken nodded thoughtfully. "And that's all you've got? That's your theory?"

"That's our working assumption. We haven't dared send anybody into the area. All our probing's been at long distance, checking records and carefully interviewing travelers from the area where he operates. We can be reasonably sure he doesn't know about this branch of the government. If he's allowed to find out, and discovers we're investigating him, he'll do to us whatever he's done to the key people up there."

Henneken whistled. "That's a tough proposition."

Furey nodded slowly.

Garan waited until he heard the outer office door close behind Henneken, and then he said: "Pretty slick. You tell him something so close to the truth it can't be checked, but far enough away to keep him from getting anywhere on his own."

Furey looked at him sourly. "That's what you think. Give him just three days, and he'll have it all figured out. We're lucky to wangle that much." He leaned forward. "Look, Don, we're dealing with Henny Henneken, not some part-time stringer for the *Vineland Times-Journal*. He's as good as a separate branch of government any day. As a matter of fact, he's got sources scattered all over the place. Anything we know, he knows. Maybe a few days later, but he knows."

"Yeah," Garan agreed with the air of a man unwrapping a bombshell,

"I guess you're right. Maybe we ought to do something about that secretary of yours, Cissie."

Furey doused the bomb in cold water with a tilt of his mouth. "Cissie's a good, efficient secretary. She does her job for me. If she feels she needs extra money and works for Henny on the side, you can be sure any other girl I might hire would succumb to the same temptation. Some day, she's going to put me in a spot by becoming careless, and letting me catch her officially. Then I'll have to fire her. That's the chance she's taking."

"And meanwhile that's the chance you're taking with Henny," Garan shot back, annoyed.

Furey sighed. "Don, we've learned to live with radioactivity. It's a statistical fact that kids are being born with a higher index of resistance to the stuff. Meanwhile, we keep to the decontaminated areas and wear our AntiRad topcoats."

He pointed to the revised map of the United States hanging on the wall. "That's *us*. That's a whole country full of people—ninety-nine million of us—learning to live with things that would have killed our parents, physically or spiritually. Our job, here, is to make sure those people can handle any new danger that may crop up. In its own way, that involves learning to live with Henny Henneken. And with Eugene Outlaw."

Furey re-read the report for the third time, excitement rising high within him. There were photographs of Eugene Outlaw, clipped from newspapers, captioned: "Leading Citizen Dedicates New Public Building." There were society columns: "Local Philanthropist and Prominent Businessman weds Daughter of Governor." Outlaw had progressed.

And it was the direction and manner of that progress that were beginning to strike significant chords in Furey.

Take an ordinary, average man, add the ability to acquire anything within the scope of his ambition, mix well, and you got captions like: "Local Philanthropist and Prominent Businessman weds Daughter of Governor." *Not* "Daughter of Governor Weds." *Not:* "New Public Building Dedicated. Present were Joe Smith, Mayor, Bill Jones, Selectman, and Eugene Outlaw, leading citizen." You got free football tickets, no taxes, extra rations. And who did the little tailor marry after he killed the giant? Why, the Prince's daughter, of course!

Marvin Gorcey hadn't changed. He'd changed his name, true. A little boy with a bedsheet knotted around his shoulders doesn't jump off the front stoop yelling, "I'm Willie Polovinsky!" What he yells is: "I'm Superman!"

And so he was. So he certainly was. But he had all the unchanneled, unrealistic imagination of that little boy. He'd rather move mountains to dam the raging waters than get the state legislature to institute a program of flood control.

He was superman, all right. But not because of something inherent in himself. Not because lifelong barriers to superior mental ability had

been removed. He was the same, average guy he'd always been. Something new had been added—something from outside.

And what if a dedicated, trained, imaginative man found a way to tap the same mysterious source of power, and applied it to something useful? What if he used it to administer wisely, and kept the nation secure, and independent, able to face the future without fear?

How would a man like Gordon Furey go about transferring Outlaw's ability to himself? How would a man like Gordon Furey go about getting in contact with Eugene Outlaw?

That afternoon Furey went down to Penn Station and bought his own tickets to Providence, without asking Cissie to get them for him. And then he officially gave himself a vacation, had Cissie arrange transportation to Florida, and bought a large-size bottle of suntan oil which seemed highly incongruous when he unpacked his bag in the chill of the Rhode Island hotel room . . .

Keeping a superman under surveillance wasn't too difficult if you took care not to forget that he wasn't as smart as he appeared to be. Outlaw's imagination was strictly limited. He could no more see the signposts he'd erected all around himself than he could foresee that any disturbance in the large-scale normal pattern of human actions would inevitably be detected. He was instinctively wary—as a cat is wary when it walks across bared copper wire after first assuring itself that it can't possibly trip.

Furey played his quarry as he might have played a big, powerful fish in a breakout-proof tank. He took his time, knowing that even after Henny Henneken found out that the radioactivity claptrap was a blind, he would have to discover where Furey was hiding and duplicate all the spadework his unseen adversary had already put in. Furey had a week, at least.

He made a thorough, cautious study of Outlaw's habits. He found out exactly who the most frequent visitors to his home were, and what time he arose in the morning and retired at night. He discovered that there was a constant stream of messengers coming to the man's home with invitations, personal notes, letters too delicate to be entrusted to the mails, and the like.

Therefore, on the third day of his stay in Providence, Gordon Furey knocked on Outlaw's front door with a relaxed attitude of mind and a look of sanguine ordinariness on his face. He informed the butler that he bore a message, was promptly ushered to Outlaw's study, and waited expectantly for the thoroughly average man behind the desk to look up.

When he did, Outlaw gave him a glance as startling as it was candid. "Please sit down, Mr. Furey," he said. "I'm very glad to see you. *It* has been expecting you."

Furey lowered himself warily into a chair. It took him a full minute before he could get back the self-assurance that had walked with him only a moment before.

"Glad to see *you*, Mr. Outlaw," he replied after that vitally necessary moment. "It?"

Outlaw nodded gravely. "Yes. It had been living in Providence for quite some time. It doesn't come from this planet, of course, but it had been quite comfortable here for several hundred years. It's a symbiote, you see. It lives in people, and gives them what they want in return. But it likes to be comfortable. When the bomb fell, it was very unhappy."

Furey was having trouble lowering his threshold of incredulity to match the speed of Outlaw's revelations. But somehow, miraculously, he managed. "So it picked you for its next host," he deduced.

Outlaw nodded again. "That's right. But I can't give it everything it wants now, and frankly, Mr. Furey, I don't like it either. It's emotionally exhausting to work at top speed all the time.

"It knows that one person can't keep it happy any more," Outlaw went on. "Society's gotten too big for it. It wants to make sure there aren't any more bombs, or any other dangers to annoy it. So it wants to live in *you*." He looked at Furey hopefully. "It doesn't hurt," he said. "It's very comfortable, really. It's just that it *pushes* you . . ."

Furey nodded. Here it was. Here it was, being handed to him. The ultimate tool for freedom. He felt a faint prickling of pride that it had chosen him.

"Of course," he said. "That's what I came for."

Outlaw stood up, extending his hand. "Thank you, Mr. Furey," he said in a relieved voice.

He and Fury shook hands. It crossed over. There was the faintest of nerve-root pricklings, a momentary twinge of pain, and it began to live in Furey.

Henny Henneken watched Furey walk away. His skin felt cold at the realization that the man had gotten so close. But not close enough. He must have been terribly disappointed to discover that Outlaw had already lost his power to someone else—that another had gotten there ahead of him. He wondered if Furey knew who the someone was.

Oh, well, it didn't matter. Fairly soon, Furey's concepts of government wouldn't matter at all.

Eugene Outlaw looked up for the third time that night. "Please sit down, Mr. Garan," he said, more relieved than he could express that the last part of his burden was finally going to be taken from him. "Please sit down," he repeated. "*It's* been waiting."

And so the three supermen went back to New York along their various routes, each ready to keep the bombs from falling.

I DO NOT LOVE THEE, DOCTOR FELL

by Robert Bloch

Bromely couldn't remember who had recommended Doctor Fell. The name had popped into his mind (funny, something like that popping *into* his mind at a time when so many things seemed to be popping *out* of it!) and he must have made an appointment.

At any rate, the receptionist seemed to know him, and her "Good morning, Mr. Bromely" had a warm, pleasant sound. The door of the inner office, closing behind him, had a harsh, grating sound. Both seemed oddly familiar.

Bromely sensed the same misplaced familiarity as he gazed around the inner office. The bookshelves and filing cases to the left of the window, the desk to the right, the couch in the corner almost duplicated the arrangement in his own office. This was a good omen, he felt. He'd be at home here. At home. But, *you can't go home again. Home is where the heart is. You have stolen my heart, now don't go 'way. As we sang love's old sweet song on—*

It took a tremendous, conscious effort to pull out of that one, but Bromely did it. He wanted to make a good impression on the Doctor.

Doctor Fell rose to greet him from his chair behind the desk. He was a tall, thin man of about Bromely's age and build, and Bromely received a vague impression that his features were not dissimilar. The subdued lighting did not lend itself to a closer scrutiny of the psychiatrist's countenance, but Bromely was aware of a look of purpose and intensity quite foreign to his own face.

The same purpose and intensity drove Doctor Fell around the desk, communicated in his hearty handclasp.

"You're prompt, Mr. Bromely," said Doctor Fell. His voice was deep and low. *Deep and Low. Low and Behold. Behold, Bedad and Begob. Shadrach, Mesach and Abednego, Inc.*

How he got out of that one, Bromely never knew. He was somewhat surprised to find himself on the couch. Apparently he'd been talking to Doctor Fell for quite some time—and quite rationally, too. Yes, he remembered, now. He'd been answering all the routine questions.

Doctor Fell knew that he was Clyde Bromely, age 32, public relations counsel. Born in Erie, Pennsylvania. Parents dead. Business, lousy. No business. No *business like show business, there's no business I know—*

Had he said that? Apparently not, because Doctor Fell's rich, deep, comforting voice moved right along, asking the questions and extracting the answers. And it was quite all right to talk to Doctor Fell, tell him all he knew. Fell was a good psychiatrist.

Bromely knew a little something about psychiatry himself. Oh, not the technical terms of course, but more than a smattering of technique. This was a routine orientation, preliminary to probing. And Bromely cooperated.

When Doctor Fell began to ask questions about his health and his general background, Bromely took a sheaf of papers from his inside coat pocket and handed them over.

"Here it is, Doc," he said. "Complete report on the physical. Had it taken last week." He indicated a second folded sheaf. "And here's the autobiography. All the names you'll need—friends, relatives, teachers, employers, the works. Everything I could remember. Which isn't much, right now."

Doctor Fell smiled in the shadows. "Excellent," he said. "You seem to understand the necessity of cooperation." He put the papers on the desk. "I'll check over this later," he told Bromely. "Although I imagine I'm already familiar with most of the contents."

Bromely got that panicky feeling again. Whoever had recommended Doctor Fell to him must also have talked to Doctor Fell about his case. Now who would that be? He hesitated to ask—not that he felt ashamed, but it would be an admission that he was pretty far gone if he couldn't even recall how he'd come here. Well, it didn't matter. He was grateful to be here, and that was the important thing. He needed Doctor Fell.

"You've got to help me, Doctor Fell," he was saying. "You're my last hope. That's why I've come to you. You must understand that, because it's the crux of the whole matter. I would never have come to you unless you were my last hope. I'm at the end of my rope. When you come to the end of your rope, you swing. I'm swinging, now. I'm swinging down the lane. Down Memory Lane. I wanted to be a songwriter, once. But my lyrics sounded as if they were stolen. That's my problem. Association. I've got too much association. Everything I do or say sounds like it's stolen from somebody else. Imitation. Mimicry. Until there's nothing original,

nothing basic beneath to which I can cling. I'm losing myself. There's no real *me* left."

Bromely went on like this for about an hour. He said everything that came into his mind. The associative clichés poured out, and with them the desperate plea for help.

Doctor Fell scribbled in his notebook and said nothing. At the end of the session he tapped Bromely on the shoulder.

"That'll be enough for today," he said. "Tomorrow, same time? Let's plan on an hour a day, five days a week."

"Then you think you can help me?"

Doctor Fell nodded. "Let's say that I think you can help yourself. Five days a week, from now on."

Bromely rose from the couch. Doctor Fell's face wavered and blurred before him. He was very tired, very confused, but oddly relieved despite the physical strain that affected his vision. There was just one thing bothering him—and suddenly, he remembered it.

"But, Doc, I just happened to think. You know, I'm not doing too well with the business these days and five days a week—"

The hand gripped his shoulder. "I quite understand. But let's put it this way. Your case—your problem, that is—interests me, personally. And even a psychiatrist has been known to extend his services on occasion, without fee."

Bromely couldn't believe his ears at first. "You mean—it won't cost me anything?" His expression of gratitude was genuine. "Doc, you're a real friend. A friend in need. A friend in deed. Indeed."

Doctor Fell chuckled. "Believe me, Mr. Bromely, I *am* your friend. You'll find that out for yourself, in time, I trust."

As Clyde Bromely went out the door he felt the phrases flooding through his brain. *In God we trust, all others pay cash. My best and only friend. A man's best friend is his mother.*

The receptionist said something to him as he left, but Bromely was too preoccupied to catch her words. He was *engrossed in thought,* he was *deep in contemplation, Deep in the Heart of Texas. Death and Texas. Nothing's sure but.*

The rest of the day passed in a blur. Almost before he realized it, tomorrow had come and he had come and here he was back on the couch.

Doctor Fell listened as he told him about his father and mother, and about the peculiar feeling he now had—the feeling that Doctor Fell reminded him of his father and mother. Brother and sister I have none, but I am my father's only son. Who am I?

"Who are you?" Doctor Fell asked the question, softly. "That's really what's bothering you, isn't it? Who are you? You can answer that question if you want to, you know. So try. Try. Who are you?"

It was the *wrong* question. Bromely felt it, and he froze. Somewhere,

deep inside, words formed an answer. But he couldn't find the words. He couldn't find that spot, inside him, where the words came from.

For the rest of the hour he just lay there on the couch.

Doctor Fell said nothing. When the time was up he tapped Bromely on the shoulder, muttered "Tomorrow, then," and turned away.

Bromely got out of the office. The receptionist stared at him oddly, half-opened her mouth to say something, and didn't. Bromely shrugged. Somehow he managed to find his way back to his own office.

He walked in and asked *his* girl for messages. Apparently whatever was wrong with him showed in his appearance, because she did that half-open-mouth trick too. Then she managed to control herself and tell him that CAA had called just a few minutes ago and wanted to see him. There was a chance to handle Torchy Harrigan.

That was the news he'd been waiting for. Bromely snapped out of it, fast. Torchy Harrigan—just signed for a new network video show—two pictures coming up with MGM—big deal with CAA, Consolidated Artists of America—personal representative—press releases to all dailies—

"Call them back and tell them I'm on my way over," he said. "Bromely rides again!"

Bromely was riding again. He was riding the couch in Doctor Fell's office. He was *riding for a fall, riding hell-for-leather—*

And all the while he was talking it out, gasping and sobbing and wheezing and choking it out.

"I can't explain it, Doc. I just can't figure it out! Here I had this deal sewed up with Harrigan, just the kind of setup I've been looking for. Two bills a week and all expenses, a chance to go out to the Coast with him, the works. Even turned out that his business manager is Hal Edwards—good friend of mine, known him for years. He gave Harrigan the pitch on me, built me up.

"So I walked in on Edwards and we talked it over, and then we went up to Harrigan's suite at the Plaza to talk it over. And Harrigan gave me the big hello, listened to Hal Edwards pitch for me—greatest flack in the business, all that kind of thing.

"You get the picture, Doc? The whole deal was in the bag. Harrigan was just waiting for me to give him the word on my plan for a publicity campaign. Edwards flashed me the cue and I opened my mouth.

"But nothing came out. You understand me? But *nothing!* I couldn't think of anything to say. Oh, there were words and phrases whirling around in my head, only they didn't add up. I couldn't think like a press agent any more."

All the while he talked, Bromely had been watching Doctor Fell's face. At first it seemed far away, but now it was coming closer and closer, getting bigger and bigger until it blotted out everything.

And Doctor Fell's voice was like distant thunder, then thunder near at hand, thunder overhead.

Vision and hearing played their tricks, but Bromely clung to Doctor Fell, clung to *words that fell from Doctor Fell for he's a jolly good fellow which nobody can deny.*

Doctor Fell had been taking notes in shorthand. He glanced at them now as he spoke. In a moment, Bromely realized he was merely reading off a string of quotes from Bromely's previous conversation. The phrases droned on, louder and louder.

"Can't figure it out . . . sewed up . . . setup . . . two bills a week . . . the works . . . gave Harrigan the pitch on me, built me up . . . big hello . . . greatest flack in the business . . . get the picture . . . in the bag . . . give him the word . . . flashed me the cue . . . but nothing . . . didn't add up."

Doctor Fell leaned forward. "What do those phrases mean to you, Bromely? What do they really *add up* to, in your mind?"

Bromely tried to think about it. He tried hard. But all he could come out with was, "I don't know. They're all slang expressions I used to use in public relations a few years ago. Come to think of it, they're a little dated now, aren't they?"

Doctor Fell smiled. "Exactly. And doesn't that tie in with your final statement, that you couldn't think like a press agent anymore? Isn't that part of your problem, Mr. Bromely—that you aren't a press agent any more, really? That you're losing your identity, losing your orientation? Let me ask you once again, now: *who are you?*"

Bromely froze up. He couldn't answer because he couldn't think of the answer. He lay there on the couch, and Doctor Fell waited. Nothing happened.

Nothing seemed to happen for a long, long time. How Bromely got through the next two days he couldn't remember. All he recalled were the hours on the couch—and it seemed to him that he shuttled back and forth between his office and Doctor Fell's more than once a day.

It was hard to check, of course, because he didn't talk to anyone. He lived alone in a one-room walkup apartment and he ate at one-arm counter joints. He wasn't talking to his office-girl, Thelma, any more either. There was nothing to talk about—no calls since the unfortunate Harrigan affair—and he owed her for three weeks' back salary. Besides, she almost seemed afraid of him when he appeared in the office. Come to think of it (and it was so hard to come to think of it, or anything else, so very hard) even Doctor Fell's little receptionist looked frightened when he walked in, without a word.

Without a word. That was his problem. He had no words any longer. It was as though his final effort, talking to Harrigan and Hal Edwards, had drained him dry of the ability to communicate. All the clichés had flowed out of him, leaving . . . nothing.

He realized it now, lying on the couch in Doctor Fell's office. Once more Doctor Fell had asked the single question, the only question he ever asked. "Who are you?"

And he couldn't answer. There was nothing. He was nobody. For years, now, he'd been in the process of becoming nobody. It was the only explanation that fitted. But he couldn't seem to explain.

With a start, he realized that it wasn't necessary. Doctor Fell was sitting close to Bromely now, breaking the long silence, whispering confidentially in his ear.

"All right," he was murmuring. "Let's try a different approach. Maybe *I* can tell you who you are."

Bromely nodded gratefully, but somewhere deep within him, fear was rising.

"Your case is quite remarkable in a way," said Doctor Fell, "but only because it's one of the first. I don't believe it will be the last. Within several years, there'll be thousands of men like you. The schizoids and the paranoids will have to move over and make room for a new category."

Bromely nodded, waited.

"You know anything about disease germs, bacteria? These organisms undergo swift mutations. Men invent sulfa drugs and the germs develop tolerance to sulfa. Men use antibiotics—penicillin, streptomycin, a dozen others. And the bugs adapt. They breed new strains of bugs."

He thinks I'm bugs, Bromely told himself, but he listened. Fell went on, his voice rising slightly.

"Bugs change, but still they spawn on men. And aberration changes with the times, too—but still it spawns on men. Five hundred years ago the commonest form of insanity was belief in demoniac possession. Three hundred years ago men had delusions of witchcraft and sorcery. A man who couldn't integrate his personality created a new one—he became a wizard. Because the wizard was the symbol of power, who knew the secrets of Life and Death. The disintegrating personality seeks reaffirmation in Authority. Does that make sense to you?"

Bromely nodded, but actually nothing made sense to him any more. The fear rose within him as Doctor Fell's voice rose without.

"Yes, three hundred years ago, thousands of men and women went to the stake firmly convinced that they were, actually, witches and wizards.

"Times change, Bromely. Look what happened to you. Your personality disintegrated, didn't it? You began to lose touch with reality.

"You lived alone, without personal ties to reaffirm identity. Your work was phony, too—the epitome of all phoniness—manufacturing lies to create artificial press-agent personalities for others. You lived in a phony world, used phony words and phrases, and before you knew it, nothing you did was quite real to you any more. And you got panicked because you felt your sense of identity slipping away. True?"

Bromely felt the fear very close now, because Doctor Fell was closer. But he wanted Doctor Fell to stay, wanted him to solve this problem.

"You're not a fool, Clyde." Doctor Fell used his first name now and it underlined the intimacy of his words. "You sensed something was going wrong. And so you did what others are beginning to do today. You did that which will create, in years to come, a new kind of mania."

The fear was *here*, now. But Bromely listened.

"Some start by seeking the 'self-help' books, just as old-time sorcerers used to study grimoires. Some go further and experiment in all the odd bypaths of parapsychology—ESP, telepathy, occultism. And some go all the way. They cannot conjure up the Devil but they can commune with Freud, with Adler, with Jung and Moll and Stekel and the other arch-fiends. They don't chant spells any more, but they learn the new Cabala, the new language of Mystery. *Schizophrenia, echolalia, involutional melancholia*—the words come trippingly from the tongue, do they not?

"You should know, Clyde. Didn't you visit the library on those long dull days when business was bad, and read endlessly in psychiatry? Didn't you bury yourself, these past several months, in a completely new world of delusion and hallucination and obsession, of neurosis and psychosis? In other words, when you felt you were going crazy—just as in the past, men felt they were becoming possessed of the Devil—didn't you seek to fight it by studying psychiatry as the ancients studied the black arts?"

Bromely tried to sit up. Doctor Fell's face loomed closer, swung away, loomed closer again.

"You know what happened to those men, Clyde. They became, in their own minds, wizards. And you know now—surely you must have guessed—what has happened to you. During the past week, you couldn't be a press agent any more. You couldn't be a rational human being any more. In an effort to project, to invest in a new identity, you became a psychiatrist. And *you invented me!*

"You've told yourself that this office is something like your own office, my receptionist resembles your girl, I resemble you. Don't you understand? This *is* your office. That *is* your girl. You've been coming in daily and lying down here on your own couch. No wonder she's frightened, hearing you talk to yourself. *Now* do you know who you are?"

Was it Doctor Fell or the fear screaming in his ears?

"This is your last chance, Clyde. You've got to decide once and for all. You can be yourself again, completely, if you have faith in your own identity. If not, you're the first of the new maniacs. Let me ask you once again, once and for all: *who are you?*"

Clyde Bromely lay there on the couch while the room whirled and swirled. He saw pictures, endless pictures: a faded snapshot of a little Clyde, clinging to Mamma's skirt—Bromely, Lt. j.g., U.S.N., in uniform—Speed Bromely, public relations, shaking hands with a top comic at a benefit show—Bromely sitting in the public library, seeking the answer

in the ologies and the isms—Bromely lying on the couch, clawing at nothing.

Bromely saw the pictures, shuffled them, sorted them, and made his choice.

Then the fear fell away, and Bromely slept. He slept there on the couch for a long, long time. When he woke up it was dark and he was alone in the room. Somebody was rapping on the door.

It was his girl. He knew that now. He was in his own office, and his own girl came in, timidly and hesitantly, as he rose with a smile of renewed confidence.

"I was worried," she said. "You being in here so long, and—"

He laughed, and laughed again inside as he realized that the sound but dimly conveyed the new security he felt within himself.

"I was sleeping," he told her. "There's nothing to worry about, my dear. From now on, we're going places. I've been in a pretty bad slump for the past month or so—someday I'll tell you all about it—but I'm all right now. Let's go out for dinner and we'll make plans."

The girl smiled. She could sense the change, too. Dark as the room was, it seemed to fill with sudden sunlight.

"All right," she said. "All right, Mr. Bromely."

He stiffened. "Bromely? That patient? Don't you know me, my dear?"

CLERICAL ERROR

by Mark Clifton

The case of David Storm came to the attention of Dr. K. Heidrich Kingston when Dr. Ernest Moss, psychiatrist in charge of the Q Security wing of the government workers' mental hospital, recommended lobotomy. The recommendation was on the lead-off sheet in Storm's medical history file. It was expressed more in the terms of a declaration of intention than a request for permission.

"I had a little trouble in getting this complete file, doctor," Miss Verity said, as she laid it on his desk. "The fact is Dr. Moss simply brought in the recommendation and asked me to put your initials on it so he could go ahead. I told him that I was still just your secretary, and hadn't replaced you yet as Division Administrator."

Kingston visualized her aloof, almost unfriendly eyes and the faint sarcasm of her clipped speech as she respectfully told off Dr. Moss in the way an old time nurse learns to put doctors in their place, unmistakable but not quite insubordinate. He knew Miss Verity well; she had been with him for twenty years; they understood one another. His lips twitched with a wry grin of appreciation. He looked up at her as she stood beside his desk, waiting for his reaction.

"I gather he's testing the strength of my order that I must personally approve all lobotomies," Kingston commented dryly.

"I'm quite certain the staff already knows your basic opposition to the principle of lobotomy, doctor," she answered him formally. "You made it quite clear in an article you wrote several years ago, May 1958, to be exact, wherein you stated—"

"Yes, yes, I know," he interrupted, and quoted himself from the article, " 'The human brain is more than a mere machine to be disconnected if the attending psychiatrist just doesn't happen to like the way it operates.' I still feel that way, Miss Verity."

"I'm not questioning your medical or moral judgment, doctor," she answered, with a note of faint reproof, "merely your tactical. At the time you alienated a very large block of the profession, and they haven't forgotten it. Psychiatrists are particularly touchy about any public question of their omnipotent right and rightness. In view of our climb to power, that was a tactical error. I also feel the issuance of this order, so soon after taking over the administration of this department, was a bit premature. Dr. Moss said he was not accustomed to being treated like an intern. He merely expressed what the whole staff is thinking, of course."

"So he's the patsy the staff is using to test my authority," Kingston mused. "He is in complete charge of the Q. S. wing. None of the rest of us, not even I, have the proper Security clearances to go into that wing, because we might hear the poor demented fellows mumbling secrets which are too important for us to know."

"You'll have to admit they've set a rather neat trap, doctor," Miss Verity said. A master of tactics, herself, she could admire an excellent stroke of the opposition. "Without a chance to see the patient and make a personal study, you can't very well override the recommendations of the psychiatrist in charge. You'd be the laughingstock of the entire profession if you tried it. You can't see the patient because I haven't been able to get Q. S. clearance for you, yet. And you can't ignore the Security program, because that's a sacred cow which no one dares question."

It was a clear summation, but Kingston knew she was also reproving him for having laid himself open to such a trap. She had advised against the order and he had insisted upon it anyway.

He pushed himself back from his desk and got to his feet. He was not a big man, but he gave the impression of solid strength as he walked over to the window of his office. He looked out through the window and down the avenue toward various governmental office buildings which lined the street as far as he could see. His features were strong and serene, and, with his shock of prematurely white hair, gave him the characteristic look of a governmental administrator.

"I've not been in this government job very long," he said, as much to the occupants of the buildings down the street as to her, "but I've learned one thing already. When you don't want to face up to the consequences of a bad decision, you just promise to make an investigation." He turned around and faced his secretary. "Tell Dr. Moss," he said, "that I'll make an investigation of the . . . who is it? . . . the David Storm case."

Miss Verity looked as if she wanted to say something more, then clamped her thin lips shut. But at the door, leading out to her own office, she changed her mind.

"Doctor," she said with a mixture of exasperation and curiosity, "suppose you do find a way to make effective intercession in the David Storm case? After all, he's nobody. He's just another case. Suppose you are able to get another psychiatrist assigned to the case. Suppose Dr. Moss is wrong

about him being an incurable, and you really get a cure. What have you gained?"

"I've got to start somewhere, Miss Verity," Kingston said gently, without resentment. "Have you had a recent look at the sharply rising incident of disturbance among these young scientists in government work, Miss Verity? The curing of Storm, if that could happen, might be only incidental, true—but it would be a start. I've got some suspicions about what's causing this rising incident. The Storm case may help to resolve them, or dismiss them. It's considerably more than merely making my orders stick. I've got to start somewhere. It might as well be with Storm."

"Very well, doctor," she answered, barely opening her lips. Obviously this was not the way she would have handled it. Even a cursory glance through the Storm file had shown her he was a person of no consequence. Even if Dr. Kingston succeeded, there was no tactical or publicity value to be gained from it. If Storm were a big-name scientist, then the issue would be different. A cause celebre could be made of it. But as it was, well, facing facts squarely, who would care? One way or the other?

The case history on David Storm was characteristic of Dr. Moss. It was the meticulous work of a thorough technician who had mastered the primary level of detachment. It recorded the various treatments and therapies which Dr. Moss had tried. It reported sundry rambling conversations, incoherent rantings and complaints of David Storm.

And it lacked comprehension.

Kingston, as he plowed through the dossier, felt the frustrated irritation, almost despair, of the creative administrator who must depend upon technicians who lack any basic feeling for the work they do. The work was all technically correct, but in the way a routine machinist would grind a piece of metal to the precise measurements of the specs.

"How does one go about criticizing a man for his total lack of any creative intuition?" Kingston mumbled angrily at the report. "He leaves no loopholes for technical criticism, and, in his frame of thinking, if you tried to go beyond that you'd merely be picking on vague generalities."

The work was all technically correct. There wasn't even a clerical error in it.

A vague idea, nothing more than a slight feeling of a hunch, stirred in Kingston's mind. In some of the arts you could say to a man, "Well, yes, you've mastered all the technicalities, but, man, you're just not an artist." But he couldn't tell Dr. Moss he wasn't a doctor, because Dr. Moss had a diploma which said he was. Men with minds of clerks could only understand error on a clerical level.

He tried to make the idea more vivid in his mind, but it refused to jell. It simply remained a commentary. The case history told a complete story, but David Storm never emerged from it as a human being. He remained nothing more than a case history. Kingston could get no feeling of

the substance of the man. The report might as well have dealt with lengths of steel or gallons of chemical.

In a sort of self-defense, Kingston called in Miss Verity, away from her complex of administrative duties, and resorted to a practice they had established together, years before.

He had started his technique with simple gestalt exercises in empathy; such as the deliberate psychosomatic stimulation of pain in one's own arm to better understand the pain in some other person's broken arm. Through the years it had been possible to progress to the higher gestalt empathies of personality identification with a patient. Like other dark areas of the unknown in sciences, there had been many ludicrous mistakes, some danger, and discouragement amounting to despair. But in the long run he had found a technique for a significant increase in his effectiveness as a psychiatrist.

The expression on Miss Verity's face, when she sat down at the side of his desk with her notebook, was interesting. They were both big wheels now, he and she, and she resented taking time out from her control over hundreds of lesser wheels. Yet she was a part of the pattern of empathy. Her hard and unyielding core of practicality, realism, provided a background to contrast, in sharp relief, to the patterns of madness. Obscurely, she derived a pleasure from this contrast; and a nostalgic pleasure, also, from a return to the old days when he had been a young and struggling psychiatrist and she, his nurse, had believed in him enough to stick by him. Kingston wondered if Miss Verity really knew what she did want out of life. He pushed the speculation aside and began his dictation.

> As a student, David Storm represented the all too common phenomenon of a young man who takes up the study of a science because it is the socially accepted thing to do, rather than because he had the basic instincts of the true scientist.

Kingston felt himself slipping away into the familiar sensation syndrome of true empathy with his subject. As always, he had to play a dual role. It was insufficient to enter into the other person's mind and senses, feel and see as he felt and saw. No, at the same time he must also reconstruct the individual's life pattern to show the conflicts inherent in that framework which would later lead him into such frustrations as to mature into psychosis.

In the Storm case this was particularly important. A great deal more than just an obscure patient was at stake. By building up a typical framework of conflict, using Storm as merely the focal point, he might be better able to understand this trend which was proving so dangerous to young men in science. And since our total culture had become irrevocably tied to progress in science, he might be better able to prevent a blight from destroying that culture.

His own office furniture faded away. He was there; Miss Verity was

there; the precise and empty notes of Dr. Moss were there in front of him; but, to him, these things became shadows, and in the way a motion picture or television screen takes over the senses of reality, he went back to the college classrooms where David Storm had received instruction.

It was unfortunate that the real fire of science did not burn in any of his college instructors, either. Instead, they were also the all too common phenomenon of small souls who had grasped frantically at a few "proved" facts, and had clung to these with the desperate tenacity of drowning men in seas of chaos. "You cannot cheat science," these instructors were fond of saying with much didactic positiveness. "If you will follow the procedures we give you, exactly, your experiment will work. That is proof we are right!"

"If it works, it must be right" was so obviously true to Storm that he simply could not have thought of any reason or way to doubt it. He graduated without ever having been handed the most necessary tool in all science, skepticism, much less instructed in its dangers and its wise uses. For there are true-believer fanatics to be found in science, also.

Under normal conditions, Storm would have found some mediocre and unimportant niche he deserved. For some young graduates in science the routine technician's job in a laboratory or shop is simply an opening wedge, a foot on the first rung of his ladder. For David Storm's kind, that same job is a haven, a lifetime of small but secure wage. Under such conditions the conflicts, leading to psychosis, would not have occurred.

But these are not normal times. We have science allied to big government, and controlled by individuals who have neither the instincts nor the knowledge of what science really is. This has given birth to a Security program which places more value upon a stainless past and an innocuous mind than upon real talent and ability. It was the socially acceptable and the secure thing for Storm to seek work in government-controlled research. With his record of complete and unquestioning conformity, it was as inevitable as sunrise that he should be favored.

It was as normal as gravity that his Security ratings should increase into the higher echelons of secrecy as he continued to prove complaisant, and, therefore, trustworthy. The young man with a true instinct for science is a doubter, a dissenter, and, therefore, a trouble maker. He, therefore, cannot be trusted with real importance. Under this condition, it was as natural as rain that when a time came for someone to head up a research section, Storm was the only man available.

It was after this promotion into the ranks of the Q. S. men that the falsity of the whole framework began to make itself felt. He had

proved to be a good second man, who always did what he was told, who followed instructions faithfully and to the letter. But now he found himself in a position where there were no ready-made instructions for him to follow.

Kingston took up the Moss report and turned some pages to find the exact reference he wanted. Miss Verity remained passively poised, ready to speed into her shorthand notes again. Kingston found the sheet he wanted and resumed his dictation.

Storm got no satisfaction from his section administrator. "You're the expert," his boss told him. "You're supposed to *tell* us the answers, not *ask* us for them." His tentative questions of other research men got him no satisfaction. Either they were in the same boat as he, and as confused, or they weren't talking to this new breed who called himself a research scientist.

But one old fellow did talk, a little. He asked Storm, with disdain, if he expected the universe to furnish him with printed instructions on how it was put together. He commented, acidly, that in his opinion we were handing the fate of our civilization to a bunch of cookbook technicians.

Storm was furious, of course. He debated with himself as to whether he should, as a good loyal citizen, report the old fellow to the loyalty board. But he didn't. Something stopped him, something quite horrible—a thought all his own. This man was a world-famous scientist. He had once been a professor of science at a great university. Storm had been trained to believe what professors said. What if this one were right?

The doubts that our wise men have already found all the necessary right answers, which should have disturbed him by the time he was a sophomore in high school, began now to trouble him. The questions he should have begun to ask by the time he was a freshman in college began to seep through the tiny cracks that were opening in his tight little framework of inadequate certainties.

Kingston looked up from the report in his hands; thought for a moment; flipped a few pages of the dossier; failed to find what he wanted; turned back a couple of pages; and skimmed down the closely written record of Storm's demented ravings. "Oh yes, here it is," he said, when he found the reference.

It was about that time that Storm began to think about something else he would have preferred to forget. It had been one of those beer-drinking and pipe-smoking bull sessions which act as a sort of teething ring upon which college men exercise their gums in preparation for idea maturity. The guy who was dominating the talking already had a reputation for being a radical; and Storm had listened

with the censor's self-assurance that it was all right for *him* to listen so he would be better able to protect others, with inferior minds and weaker wills, from such exposures.

"The great danger to our culture," this fellow was holding forth, "doesn't come from the nuclear bomb, the guided missile, germ warfare, or even internal subversion. Granted there's reason why our culture should endure, there's a much greater danger, and one, apparently, quite unexpected.

"Let's take our diplomatic attitudes and moves as a cross section of the best thinking our culture, as a whole, can produce. For surely here, at this oritical level, the finest minds, skilled in the science of statecraft, are at work. And there is no question but that our best is no higher than a grammer-school level. A kid draws a line with his toe across the sidewalk and dares, double dares, his challenger to step across it. 'My father can lick your father' is not removed, in substance, from 'My air force can lick your air force.' What is our Security program but the childish chanting of 'I've got a secret! I've got a secret!'? Add to that the tendency to assemble a gang so that one can feel safer when he talks tough, the tendency to indiscriminate name calling, the inability to think in other terms than 'good guys' and 'bad guys.' Here you have the classical picture of the grammar-school level of thinking—and an exact parallel with our diplomacy.

"Now, sure, it's true that one kid of grammar-school mental age can pretty well hold his own with another of his own kind and strength. But here's the real danger. He doesn't stand a chance if he comes up against a mature adult. What if our opponent, whoever he may be, should grow up before we do? There's the real danger!"

Storm had considered the diatribe ridiculous at the time, and agreed with some of the other fellows that the guy should be locked up, or at least kicked off the campus. But now he began to wonder about certain aspects which he had simply overlooked before. "Consider the evidence, gentlemen," one of his instructors had repeated, like a parrot, at each stage of some experiment. Only now it occurred to Storm that the old boy had invariably selected, with considerable care, the particular evidence he wanted them to consider.

With equal care our statecraft had presented us with the evidence that over there, in the enemy territory, science was forced to follow the party line or get itself purged. And the party line was totally false and wrong. Therefore their notions of science must be equally wrong. And you can't cheat science. If a thing is wrong it won't work. Yet the evidence also showed that they, too, had successful nuclear fission, guided missiles, and all the rest.

This led Storm into another cycle of questions. What parts of the evidence could a man elect to believe, and what interpretations of that evidence might he dispute and still remain a totally loyal citizen,

still retain his right to highest Security confidence? This posed another problem, for he was still accustomed to turning to higher authority for instruction. But of whom could he ask such questions as these? Not his associates, for they were as wary of him as he of them. In such an atmosphere where it becomes habitual for a man to guard his tongue against any and all slips, there is an automatic complex of suspicions built up to freeze out all real exchange of ideas.

Every problem has a solution. He found the only solution open to him. He went on asking such questions of himself. But, as usual, the solution to one problem merely opened the door to a host of greater ones. The very act of admitting, openly acknowledging, such questions to himself, and knowing he dared not ask them of anyone else, filled him with an overpowering sense of furtive shame and guilt. It was an axiom of the Security framework that you were either totally loyal, or you were potentially a subversive. Had he any right to keep his Security ratings when these doubts were a turmoil in his mind?

Through the months, especially during the nights, as he lay in miserable sleeplessness, he pondered these obvious flaws in his own nature, turning them over and over like a squirrel in a cage. Then, one night, there came a whole series of questions that were even more terrifying.

What if it were not he, but the culture, which contained the basic flaw? Who, in or out of science, is so immutably right that he can pass judgment on what man is meant to know and what he may never question? If we are not to ask questions beyond accepted dogma, be it textbook or statecraft, from where is man's further knowledge and advancement to come? What if these questions which filled him with such maddening doubts were the very ones most necessary to answer? Indeed, what if our very survival depended upon just such questions and answers? Would he then be giving his utmost in loyalty if he did *not* ask them?

The walls of his too narrow framework of thinking had broken away, and he felt himself drowning in a flood of dilemmas he was unprepared to solve. When a man, in a dream, finds his life in deadly peril an automatic function takes over—the man wakes up. There is also an automatic function which takes over when the problems of reality become a deadly peril.

Storm withdrew from reality.

Kingston was silent for a moment, then his consciousness returned to the surroundings of his office, and the desk in front of him. He looked over at Miss Verity.

"Well, now," he said. "I think we begin to understand our young man a little better."

"But are you sure his conflict is typical?" Miss Verity asked.

"Consider the evidence," Kingston said with deliberate irony. "Science can progress, even exist, only where there is free exchange of ideas, and minds completely open to variant ideas. When by law, or social custom, we forbid this, we stop scientific development. Consider the evidence!" he said again. "There is already a great deal of it to show that our science is beginning to go around in circles, developing the details of the frameworks already acceptable, but not reaching out to reveal new and totally unexpected frameworks."

"I'll type this up, in case you want to review it," Miss Verity answered dryly. She did not go along with him, at all, in these flights of fancy. Certainly she saw no tactical advantage to be gained from taking such attitudes. On the contrary, if he didn't learn to curb his tongue better, all she had worked so hard to gain for the both of them could be threatened.

Kingston watched her reactions with an inward smile. It apparently had never occurred to her that his ability in gestalt empathy could be directed toward her.

There might be quite a simple solution to the Storm matter. Too many government administrators and personnel had come to regard an act under general Security regulations to be a dictum straight from Heaven. It was possible that Storm's section had already written him off as a total loss in their minds, and no one had taken the trouble to get him declassified. Kingston felt he should explore that possibility first.

He made an appointment to see Logan Maxfield, Chief Administrator of the section where Storm had worked.

His first glance, when he walked into Maxfield's office, put a damper on his confidence. Here was a man who was more of a politician than a scientist, probably a capable enough administrator within his given boundaries, but the strained cautiousness of his greeting told Kingston he would not take any unusual risks to his own safety and reputation. He belonged to that large and ever growing class of job holders in government whose safety lies in preserving the status quo, who would desperately police and defend things as they are, for any change might be a threat.

It would take unusual tactics to jar him out of his secure rightness in attitude. Kingston was prepared to employ unusual tactics.

"Storm has been electrocuted," he said quietly, "with a charge just barely short of that used on murderers. Not once, of course, but again and again. Then, also, we've stunned him over and over with hypos jabbed down through his skull into his brain. We've sent him into numerous bone-crushing and muscle-tearing spasms with drugs. But," he sighed heavily, "he's obstinate. He refuses to be cured by these healing therapies."

Maxfield's face turned a shade whiter, and his eyes fixed uncertainly on his pudgy hands lying on top of his desk. He looked over toward his special water cooler, as if he longed for a drink, but he did not get out of

his chair. A silence grew. It was obvious he felt called upon to make some comment. He tried to make it jocular, man to man.

"Of course I don't know anything about the science of psychiatry, doctor," he said at last, "but in the physical sciences we feel that methods which don't work may not be entirely scientific."

"Man," Kingston exploded with heavy irony, "you imply that psychiatry isn't an exact science? Of course it is a science! Why, man, we have all sorts of intricate laboratories, and arrays of nice shiny tools, and flashing lights on electronic screens, and mechanical pencils drawing jagged lines on revolving drums of paper, and charts and graphs, and statistics. And theory? Why, man, we've got more theory than you ever dreamed of in physical science! Of course it's a science. Any rational man has to agree that the psychiatrist is a scientist. We ought to know. We are the ones who define rationality!"

Maxfield could apparently find no answer to that bit of reasoning. Along with many others he saw no particular fallacy in defining a thing in terms of itself.

"What do you want me to do?" he asked finally.

"Here's the problem," Kingston answered, in the tone of one administrator to another. "It is unethical for one doctor to question the techniques of another doctor, so let's put it this way. Suppose you had a mathematician in your department who took up a sledge hammer and deliberately wrecked his calculating machines because they would not answer a question *he did not know how to ask.* Then failing to get the answer, suppose he recommended just disconnecting what was left of the machines and abandoning them. What would you do?"

"I think I'd get myself another mathematician," Maxfield said with a sickly attempt at lightness.

"Well, now that's a problem, too," Kingston answered easily. "I'm not questioning the methods of Dr. Moss, and obviously his attitudes are the right ones, because he's the only available psychiatrist who had been cleared to treat all these fellows you keep sending over to us under Q. S. secrecy. But there's a way out of that," he said with the attitude of a salesman on television who will now let you in on the panacea for all your troubles. "If you lifted the Security on Storm, then we could move him to another ward and try a different kind of therapy. We might even find a man who did know how to ask the question which would get the right answer."

"Absolutely impossible," Maxfield said with finality.

"Now look at it this way," Kingston said in a tone of reasonableness. "If Storm just chose to quit his job, you'd have to declassify him, wouldn't you?"

"That's different," Maxfield said. "There are proper procedures for that."

"I know," Kingston said, a little wearily. "The parting interview to im-

press him with the need for continued secrecy, the terrible weight of knowing that bolt number seventy-two in motor XYZ has a three eighths thread instead of a five eighths. So why can't you consider that Storm has left his job and declassify him in absentia. Then we could remove him to an ordinary ward and give him what may be a more effective treatment. I really don't think he can endure very much more of his present therapy."

Kingston leaned back in his chair and spoke in a tone of speculation.

"There's a theory that this treatment isn't really torture, Mr. Maxfield, because an insane person doesn't know what is happening to him. But I'm afraid that theory is fallacious. I believe the so-called insane person does know what is happening, and feels all the exquisite torture we use in trying to drive the devils out of his soul."

"Absolutely impossible," Maxfield repeated. "Although you are not a Q. S. man"—this with a certain smugness—"I'll tell you this much." He leaned forward and placed his fingertips together in his most impressive air of administrative deliberation. "We have reason to believe that David Storm was on the trail of something big. *Big*, Dr. Kingston. So big, indeed, that perhaps the very survival of the nation depends upon it!"

He hesitated a few seconds, to let the gravity of his statement sink in. Then he unlocked a desk drawer and took out a file folder.

"I had this file sent in when you made the appointment to see me," he explained. "As you no doubt know, we must have inspectors who are constantly observing our scientists, although unseen, themselves. Here is a sentence from one of our most trusted inspectors. 'Subject repeats over and over, under great emotional stress, to himself, aloud, that our very survival depends upon his finding the answers to a series of questions!' There, Dr. Kingston, does that sound like no more than the knowledge of a three eighths thread on a bolt? No, doctor," he answered his own rhetoric, "this can only mean something of monumental significance—with the fate of a world, our world, hanging in the balance. Now you see why we couldn't take chances with declassifying him!"

Kingston was on the verge of telling him what the pattern of Storm's questions really was, then better judgment prevailed. First the Security board would become more than a little alarmed that he, a non-Q. S. man, had already learned what was on Storm's mind, and pass some more silly rules trying to put a man's mind in solitary confinement. Second, Maxfield was convinced these questions must be concerned with some super gadget, and wouldn't believe his revealment of their true nature. And anyway, what business does a scientist have, asking such questions? Any sympathy he might have gained for Storm would be lost. Serves the fellow right for not sticking strictly to his slide rules and Bunsen burners!

"Mr. Maxfield," Kingston said gravely, patiently. "It is our experience that a disturbed patient often considers something entirely trivial to be of world-shaking importance. The momentous question Storm feels he

must solve may be no more than some nonsensical conundrum—such as why does a chicken cross the road. It may mean nothing whatever."

"And then again it may," Maxfield answered. "We can't take the chance. You must remember, doctor, this statement was overheard and recorded while Storm was still a sane man."

"Before he was committed, you mean," Kingston corrected softly.

"At any rate, it must have been something quite terrible to drive a man insane, just the thought of it," Maxfield argued.

"I'll not deny that possibility," Kingston agreed seriously. "The questions could have terrified him, and the rest of us, too, if we really stopped to think about them. Wouldn't it be worth the risk of say my own doubtful loyalty to make a genuine effort to find out what they were, and deal with them, instead of torturing him to drive them out of his mind?"

"I'm not sure I know what you mean," Maxfield faltered. This doctor seemed to have the most callous way of describing beneficial therapies!

"Mr. Maxfield," Kingston said with an air of candor, "I'll let you in on a trade secret. Up until now psychiatry has fitted all the descriptions applicable to a cult, and few indeed applicable to a science. We try to tailor the mind to fit the theory. But some of us, even in the field of psychiatry, are beginning to ask questions—the first dawn of any science. Do you know anything about psychosomatic medicine?"

"Very little, just an idea of what it means," Maxfield answered cautiously.

"Enough," Kingston conceded. "You know that the human body-mind may take on very real symptoms and pains of an illness as overt objection to an untenable environment. Now we are starting to ask the question: Can it be possible that our so-called cures, brought about through electro and drug shock, are a type of psychosomatic response to unendurable torture?

"I see a mind frantically darting from framework to framework, pursued inexorably by the vengeful psychiatrist with the implements of torture in his hands—the mind desperately trying to find a framework which the psychiatrist will approve and so slacken the torture. We have called that a return to sanity. But is it really anything more than a psychosomatic escape from an impossible situation? A compounded withdrawal from withdrawal?

"As I say, a few of us are beginning to ask ourselves these questions. But most continue to practice the cult rituals which can be duplicated point by point, item by item, with the rites of a savage witch doctor attempting to drive out devils from some poor unfortunate of the tribe."

From the stricken look on Maxfield's face, there was no doubt he had finally scored. The man stood up as if to indicate he could take no more. He was distressed by the problem, so distressed, in fact, that he obviously wished this psychiatrist would leave his office and just forget the whole thing.

"I . . . I want to be reasonable, doctor," he faltered through trembling lips. "I want to do the right thing." Then his face cleared. He saw a way out. "I'll tell you what I can do. I'll make another investigation of the matter!"

"Thank you, Mr. Maxfield," Kingston said gravely, without showing the bitterness of his defeat. "I thought that is what you might do."

When he got back to his office, Kingston learned that Dr. Moss had not been content merely to lay a neat little professional trap. His indignation over being thwarted in his intention to perform a lobotomy on Storm had apparently got the better of his judgment. In a rage, he had insisted upon a meeting with a loyalty board at top level. In the avid atmosphere of Government by Informers, they had shown themselves eager to hear what he might say against his superior.

But a private review of the Storm file reminded them of those mysterious and fearful questions in his deranged mind, questions which might forever be lost through lobotomy. So they advised Moss that Dr. Kingston's opposition was purely a medical matter, and did not necessarily constitute subversion.

In the report of this meeting which lay on his desk, some clerk along the way had underscored the word "necessarily" as if, gently, to remind him to watch his step in the future.

"God save our country from the clerical mind," he murmured. And then the solution to his problem began to unfold for him.

His first step in putting his plan into operation had all the appearances of being a very stupid move. It was the first of a series of equally obvious stupidities, which, in total, might add up to a solution. For stupid people are perpetually on guard against cleverness, but will fall in with and further a pattern of stupidity as if they had a natural affinity for it.

His first move was to send Dr. Moss out to the West Coast to make a survey of mental hospitals in that area.

"This memorandum certainly surprised me," Dr. Moss said curiously, as he came through Kingston's office door, waving the paper in his hand. He seated himself rather tentatively on the edge of a chair, and looked piercingly across the desk, to see if he could fathom the ulterior motives behind the move. "It is true that my section is in good order, and my patients can be adequately cared for by the attendants for a couple of weeks or so. But that you should ask me to make the survey of West Coast conditions for you—"

He let the statement trail off into the air, demanding an explanation.

"Why not you?" Kingston asked, as if surprised by the question.

"I . . . ah . . . feared our little differences in the . . . ah . . . Storm matter might prejudice you against me," Moss said, with the attitude of a man laying his cards on the table. Kingston surmised there were cards not laid out for inspection also. The move had two obvious implications. It could be a bribe, a sort of promotion, to regain Moss' good will. Or,

more subtly, it could be a threat—"You see I can transfer you out of my way, any time I may want to."

"Oh, the Storm matter," Kingston said with some astonishment. "Frankly, doctor, I hadn't connected up the two. I've been most impressed with your attention to detail, and the fine points of organization. It seemed to me you were the most logical one on the staff to spot any operational flaws out there. The fact that you can confidently leave your section in the care of your attendants is proof of that."

Moss gave a slight smirk at this praise, and said nothing.

"Now I'd be a rather poor executive administrator if I let a minor difference of professional opinion stand in the way of the total efficient organization, wouldn't I?" Kingston asked, with an amiable smile.

"Dr. Kingston," Moss began, and hesitated. Then he decided to be frank. "I . . . ah . . . the staff has felt that your appointment to this position was purely political. I begin to see it might also have been because of your ability, and your capacity to rise above small differences of . . . ah . . . opinion."

Kingston let that pass. If he happened to rise a little in the estimation of his staff through these maneuvers, that would be simply a side benefit.

"Now you're sure I'm not interrupting a course of vital treatment of your patients, Dr. Moss?" he asked.

"Most of my patients are totally and completely incurable, doctor," Moss said with finality. "Not that I don't keep trying. I do try. I try everything known to the science of psychiatry to get them thinking rationally again. But let's face it. Most of them will progress—or regress—equally well with simple human care. I fear my orderlies, guards, nurses regard me as something of a tyrant," he said with obvious satisfaction. "And it isn't likely that in the space of a couple of weeks they'll let down during my absence. You needn't worry, I'll set up the proper measures."

Kingston breathed a small sigh of relief as the man left his office. That would get Dr. Moss off the scene for a while.

Equally important, but not so easily accomplished, he must get Miss Verity away at the same time. And Miss Verity was anything but stupid.

"Has it occurred to you, Miss Verity," he asked with the grin of a man who has a nice surprise up his sleeve, "that this month you will have been with me for twenty-five years?" It was probably a foolish question. Miss Verity would know the years, months, days, hours. Not for any special reason, except that she always knew everything down to the last decimal. The stern lines of her martinet face did not relax, but her pale blue eyes showed a flicker of pleasure that he would remember.

"It has been my pleasure to serve you, doctor," she said formally. That formality between them had never been relaxed, and probably never would be since both of them wanted it. It was not an unusual relationship either in medicine or industry—as if the man should never become too apparent

through the image of the executive, lest both parties lose confidence and falter.

"We've come a long way in a quarter of a century," he said reminiscently, "from that little two-room office in Seattle. And if it weren't for you, we might still be there." Rigidly he suppressed any tone which would betray any implication that he might have been happier remaining obscure.

"Oh no, doctor," she said instantly. "A man with your ability—"

"Ability is not enough," he cut in. "Ability has to be combined with ambition. I didn't have the ambition. I simply wanted to learn, to go on learning perpetually, I suppose. You know how it was before you came with me. Patients didn't pay me. I didn't check to see what their bank account or social position was before I took them on. I was getting the reputation for being a poor man's psychiatrist, before you took charge of my office and changed all that."

"That's true," she agreed candidly, with a small secret smile. "But I looked at it this way: You were . . . you are . . . a great man dedicated to the service of humanity. I felt it would do no harm for the Right People to know about it. You can cure a disturbed rich man as easily as you can cure a poor one. And as long as your job was to listen to secrets, they might as well be important secrets—those of industrialists, statesmen, people who really matter."

She looked about the well appointed office, and out of the window toward the great governmental buildings rising in view, as if to survey the concrete results of his policies in managing his affairs. Kingston wondered how much of her ambition had been for him, and how much for herself. In the strange hierarchy of castes among government workers, she was certainly not without stature.

That remark about secrets. He knew her ability to rationalize. He wondered how much of his phenomenal rise, and his position now, was due to polite and delicate pressures she had applied in the right places.

"So now I want to do something I've put off too long," he said, letting the grin come back on his face. "I want you to take a month's vacation, all expenses paid."

She half arose out of her chair, then settled back into it again. He had never seen her so perturbed.

"I couldn't do that," she said with a rising tone of incredulity. "There are too many things of importance. We've just barely got things organized since taking over this position. You . . . you . . . why a dozen times a day there are things coming up you wouldn't know how to handle. You . . . I don't mean to sound disrespectful, doctor, but . . . well . . . you make mistakes. A great man, such as you, well, you live in another world, and without somebody to shield you, constantly—"

She broke off and smiled at him placatingly. All at once she was a tyrant mother with an adored son who has made an independent decision; a wife

with a well broken husband who has unexpectedly asserted a remnant of the manhood he once had; a career secretary who believes her boss to be a fool—a woman whose Security depended upon her indispensability.

Then her face calmed. Her expression was easily readable. The accepted more of our culture is that men exist for the benefit of women. But they can be stubborn creatures at times. The often repeated lessons in the female magazines was that they can be driven where you want them to go only so long as they think they are leading the way there. She must go cautiously.

"Right now, particularly, I shouldn't leave," she said with more composure. "I'm trying, very hard, to get you cleared for a Q. S. As you know, the Justice Department has a rather complete file folder on anybody in the country of any consequence. They have gone back through your life. They have interviewed numerous patients you have treated. I am trying to convince the Loyalty Board that a psychiatrist must, at times, make statements to his patients which he may not necessarily believe. I am trying to convince them that the statements of neurotic and psychotic patients are not necessarily an indication of a man's loyalty to his country.

"Then, too," she continued with faint reproach, "you've made public statements questioning the basic foundations upon which modern psychology is built. You've questioned the value of considering everyone who doesn't blend in with the average norm as being aberrated."

"I still question that," he said firmly.

"I know, I know," she said impatiently. "But do you have to say such things—in public?"

"Well, now, Miss Verity," he said reasonably, "if a scientist must shape his opinions to suit the standards of the Loyalty Board or Justice Department before he is allowed to serve his country—"

"They don't say you are disloyal, doctor," she said impatiently. "They just say: Why take a chance? I'm campaigning to get the right Important People to vouch for you."

"I think the work of setting up organization has been a very great strain on you," he answered with the attitude of a doctor toward a patient. "And there's a great deal more to be done. I want to make many changes. I think you should have some rest before we undertake it."

There had been more, much more. But in the end he had won a partial victory. She consented to a week's vacation. He had to be satisfied with that. If Storm were really badly demented, he could certainly make little progress in that time. But on the other hand, he would have accomplished his main purpose. He would have seen Storm, talked with him, contaminated him through letting him talk to a non-Q. S. man.

Miss Verity departed for a week's vacation with her brothers and sisters and their families—all of whom she detested.

Kingston did not try to push his plan too fast. He had a certain docu-

ment in mind, and nothing must be done to call any special attention to it.

It was the following day after the simultaneous departure of Dr. Moss and Miss Verity, in the early afternoon, that he sat at his desk and signed a stack of documents in front of him.

Because of Miss Verity's martinet tactics in gearing up the department to prompt handling of all matters, the paper which interested him above all others should be in this stack.

While he signed one routine authorization after another, he grew conscious that his mind had been going back over the maneuvers and interviews he had taken thus far in the Storm case. The emotional impatience at their blind slavery to proper and safe procedure rekindled in him, and he found himself signing at a furious rate. Deliberately he slowed himself down. In event someone should begin wondering at a series of coincidences at some later date, his signature must betray no unusual mood.

It was vital to the success of his plan that the document go through proper channels for execution as a completely routine matter. So vital that, even here, alone in the privacy of his office, he would not permit himself to riff down through the stack to see if the paper which really mattered had cleared the typing section.

He felt his hand shaking slightly at the thought he might have miscalculated the mentality of the typists, that someone might have noticed the wild discrepancy and pulled the work sheet he had written out for further question.

Just how far could a man bank on the pattern of stupidity? If the document were prematurely discovered, his only hope to escape serious consequences with the Loyalty Board was to claim a simple clerical error —the designation of the wrong form number at the top of the work sheet. He could probably win, before or after the event, because it would be obvious to anyone that a ridiculous clerical error was the only possible explanation.

A psychiatrist simply does not commit himself to be confined as an insane person.

He lay down his pen, to compose himself until all traces of any muscular waver would disappear from his signature. He tried to reassure himself that nothing could have gone wrong. The girls who filled in the spaces of the forms were only routine typists. They had the clerical mind. They checked the number on the form with the number on the work sheet. They dealt with dozens and hundreds of forms, numerically stored in supply cabinets. Probably they didn't even read the printed words on such forms—merely filled in blank spaces. If the numbered items on the work sheet corresponded with the numbered blanks on the forms, that was all they needed to go ahead.

That was also the frame of mind of those who would carry out the instructions on the documents. Make sure the proper signature authorizes

the act, and do it. If the action is wrong it is the signer's neck, not theirs. They simply did what they were told. And it was doubtful that such a vast machine as government could function if it were otherwise, if every clerk took it upon himself to question the wisdom of each move of the higher echelons.

Of course, under normal procedures, someone did check the documents before they were placed on his desk to sign. There again, if the signer took the time to check the accuracy of how the spaces were filled in, government would never get done. There had to be a checker, and in the case of his department that was a job Miss Verity had kept for herself. Her eagle eye would have caught the error immediately, and in contempt with such incompetence she would have bounced into the typing pool with fire in her eye to find out who would do such a stupid thing as this.

He had his answer ready, of course, just in case anybody did discover the mistake. He had closed out his apartment, where he lived alone, and booked a suite in a hotel. The work sheet was an order to have his things transferred to his new room number. The scribbled information was the same, and, obviously, he had simply designated the wrong form number.

But Miss Verity was away on her vacation, and there wasn't anybody to catch the mistake.

He lifted his eyes from the signature space on the paper in front of him at the rapidly dwindling stack. The document was next on top.

There it was, neatly typed, bearing no special marks to segregate it from other routine matters, and thereby call attention to it. There were no typing errors, no erasures, nothing to indicate that the typist might have been startled at what she was typing. Nothing to indicate it had been anything more than a piece of paper for her to thread into her machine, fill in, and thread out again with assembly-line regularity.

He lifted the paper off the stack and placed it in front of himself, in position for signature. He sighed, a deep and gasping sigh, almost a groan. Then he grinned in self derision. Was he already regretting his wild action, an action not yet taken?

All right then, tear up the document. Forget about David Storm and his problem. Forget about trying to buck the system. Miss Verity was quite right. Storm was a nobody. As compared with the other events of the world, it didn't matter whether Storm got cured, or had his intellect disconnected through lobotomy, or just rotted there in his cell because he had asked some impertinent questions of the culture in which he lived.

Never mind that the trap into which Storm had fallen was symbolic of the trap which was miring down modern science in the same manner. By freeing the symbol, he would in no way be moving to free all science from its dilemma.

He pushed himself back, away from his desk, and got to his feet. He walked over to the window and looked down the avenue of government buildings. Skyscrapers of offices, as far as his eye could reach. How many

of them held men whose state of mind matched his own? How many men quietly, desperately wanted to do a good job, but were already beaten by the pattern for frustration, the inability to take independent action?

There was one of the more curious of the psychological curiosities. In private an individual may confess to highly intelligent sympathies, but when he gets on a board or a panel or a committee, he has not the courage to stand up against what he thinks to be the mass temper or mores.

Courage, that was the element lacking. The courage to fight for progress, enlightenment, against the belief that one's neighbors may not think the same way. The courage to fight over the issue, for the sake of the issue, rather than for the votes one's action is calculated to win.

And in that sense David Storm was not unimportant. Kingston confessed to himself, standing there in front of the window, that he had begun this gambit in a sort of petty defiance—defiance of the efforts of Moss and the rest of his staff to thwart his instructions, defiance of Miss Verity's efforts to make him into an important figurehead, defiance of the whole ridiculous dilemma that the Loyalty program had become.

He wondered if he had ever really intended to go through with his plan. Hadn't he kept the reservation, in the back of his mind, that as long as he hadn't signed the order, as long as it wasn't released for implementation, he could withdraw? Why make such an issue over such a triviality as this Storm fellow?

Yet wasn't that the essence? Wasn't that the question every true scientist had to ask himself every day? To buck the accepted and the acceptable, or to swing along with it and rush with the tide of man toward oblivion?

In the popular books courage was always embodied in a well-muscled, handsome, well-intentioned, and rather stupid young man. But what about that wispy little unhandsome fellow, behind the thick glasses perhaps, who, against ridicule, calumny, misunderstanding, poverty, ignorance, kept on with his intent to find an aspect of truth?

Resolutely he walked over to his desk, picked up his pen again, and signed the document. There! He was insane! The document said so! And the document was signed by the Chief Administrator of Psychiatric Division, Bureau of Science Co-ordination. That should be enough authority for anybody!

He tossed it into the outgoing basket, where it would be picked up by the mail clerk and routed for further handling. Rapidly now, he continued signing other papers, tossing them into the same basket, covering the vital one so that it was down in the middle of the stack, unlikely to call special attention to itself.

They came for him at six o'clock the next morning. That was what the order had stipulated, that they make the pickup at this early hour. Two of them walked into his room, through the door which he had left unlocked, and immediately separated so that they could come at him from

either side. Two burly young men who had a job to do, and who knew how to do that job. He couldn't remember having seen either of them before, and there was no look of recognition on their faces either.

"What is the meaning of this intrusion?" he said loudly, in alarm. His intonation sounded like something from a rather bad melodrama. "How dare you walk into my room!" He sat up in bed and pulled the covers up around his neck.

"There, there, Buster," one of them said soothingly. "Take it easy now. We're not going to hurt you." With a lithe grace they moved into position. One of them stood near the foot of his bed, the other came up to the head, and with a swirling motion, almost too quick to follow, slipped his hands under Kingston's armpits.

"Time to get up, Buster," the man said, and propelled him upward and outward. The covers fell away from him, and he found himself standing on his feet, without quite knowing how he got there. The second man was already eying his clothes, which he had hung over a chair the night before. They were beautifully trained, he'd have to give Moss that much credit. It spoke well for the routine administration of the Q. S. wing if all the attendants were as experienced in being firm, yet gentle. It wasn't that psychiatry was intentionally sadistic, just mistaken in its idea of treatment.

"What is the meaning of this?" he spluttered again. "Do you know who I am?" He tried to draw himself up proudly, but found it somewhat difficult with his head being slipped through a singlet undershirt.

"Sure, sure, your majesty," one of them said soothingly. "Sure we know."

"I am not 'your majesty,' " Kingston said bitingly. "I am Dr. K. Heidrich Kingston!"

"Oh, pardon me," the fellow said apologetically, and flipped Kingston's feet into the air just long enough for his helper to slip trousers onto his legs. "I'm pleased to meet you."

"Kingston!" the other fellow said in an awed voice. "That's the big shot, the wheel, himself."

"Well," the first one said, as he slipped suspenders over the shoulders, "at least he's not Napoleon." From somewhere underneath his uniform jacket he suddenly whipped out a canvas garment, a shapeless thing Kingston might not have recognized as a strait jacket if he hadn't been experienced. "You gonna co-operate, Dr. Kingston, or will we have to put this on you?"

"Oh, he's not so bad," the other fellow said. "This must be his up cycle. You're not going to give us any trouble at all, are you Dr. Kingston? You're going to go over to the hospital with us nicely, aren't you?" It was a statement, a soothing persuasive statement, not a question. "They need you over at the hospital, Dr. Kingston. That's why we came for you."

He looked at them suspiciously, craftily. Then he smoothed his face into arrogant lines of overweening ego.

"Of course," he said firmly. "Let's go to the hospital. They'll soon tell you over there who I am!"

"Sure they will, Dr. Kingston," the first attendant said. "We don't doubt it for a minute."

"Let's go," the other one said.

They walked him out the door, in perfect timing. They seemed relaxed, but their fingertips on his arms where they held him were tense, ready for an expected explosion of insane violence. They'd been all through this before, many times, and their faces seemed to say that you can always expect the unexpected. Why, he might even surprise them and go all the way to his cell without trying to murder six people in the process. It just depended on how long his up cycle lasted, and what period of the phase he was in when they came for him. Probably that was the real reason why the real Dr. Kingston had specified this early hour; probably knew when this nut was in and out of his phases.

"Wonder what it's like to be such a big shot that some poor dope goes nuts thinking he's you?" one of them asked the other as they took him out of the apartment house door and down the steps to the ambulance waiting at the curb.

"I don't think I'd like to find out," the other answered.

"I tell you for the last time, I am Dr. Kingston!" Kingston insisted and allowed the right amount of exasperation to mingle with a note of fear.

"I hope it's the last time, doctor," the first one said. "It gets kinda tiresome telling you that we already know who you are. You don't have to keep telling us, you know. We believe you."

The way they got him into the body of the ambulance couldn't exactly be called a pull and a push. At one instant they were standing on either side of him at the back door, and in the next instant one of them was in front of him and the other behind him—and there they were, all sitting in a row inside the ambulance. The driver didn't even look back at him.

He kept silent all the way over to the hospital buildings. He had made his point. He had offered the reactions of a normal man caught up in a mistake, but certain it would all get straightened out without making a fuss about it. They had responded to the reactions of an insane man, and they hoped they could get him all straightened out and nicely deposited in his cell before he began to kick up a fuss about it. It just depended on the framework from which you viewed it, and he neither wanted to overdo nor underplay his part to jar them out of their frame with discrepancies.

But the vital check point was yet to come. There was nothing in the commitment form about his being a Q. S. man, but he had assigned David Storm's cell number in the Q. S. wing. He'd had to check a half dozen hotels before he'd found one with an open room of the same

number, so that the clerical error would stand up all the way down the line.

The guards of the Q. S. wing were pretty stuffy about keeping non-Q. S. men out. He might still fail in the first phase of his solution to the problem, to provide David Storm with a doctor, one who might be able to help him.

The attendants wasted no time with red tape. The document didn't call for pre-examinations, or quarantine, or anything. It just said put him into room number 1782. So they went through a side door and by-passed all the usual routines. They were good boys who always did what the coach said. And the document, signed by the Chief Coach, himself, Dr. Kingston, said put the patient in cell 1782. They were doing what they were told.

Would the two guards at the entrance of the Q. S. wing be equally good boys?

"You're taking me to my office, I assume," he said as they were walking down the corridor toward the cell wing.

"Sure, doctor," one of them said. "Nice warm cozy office. Just for you."

They turned a corner, and the two guards got up from chairs where they had been sitting at a hallway desk. One of the attendants pulled out the document from his inner jacket pocket and handed it to the guard.

"Got another customer for you," he said laconically. "For *office* number 1782." He winked broadly.

"That cell's . . . er . . . office's already occupied," the guard said instantly. "Must be a mistake."

"Maybe they're starting to double them up, now," the attendant said. "You wanna go up to the Big Chief's office and tell him he's made a mistake? He signed it, you know."

"I don't know what you men are up to!" Kingston burst out. "This whole thing is a mistake. I tell you I am Dr. Kingston. I'll have all your jobs for this . . . this . . . this practical joke! You are not taking me any farther! I refuse to go any farther!"

He laid them out for five minutes, calling upon strings of profanity, heard again and again from the lips of uncontrolled minds, that would make an old time mariner blush for shame. The four of them looked at him at first with admiration, then with disgust.

"You'd better get him into his cell," one of the guards mumbled to the attendants. "Before he really blows his stack."

"Yeah," the attendant agreed. "Looks like he's going into phase two, and we have not as yet got phase one typed. No telling what phase three might be like."

The guards stepped back. The attendants took him on down the hall of the Q. S. wing.

All the way up the elevator, to the seventeenth floor, and down the hall to the doorway of Storm's cell, Kingston kept wondering if any of

them had ever heard of the Uncle Remus story of Bre'r Rabbit and the Briar Patch. "Oh don't throw me in the briar patch, Bre'r Fox. Don't throw me in the briar patch!"

Stupid people resist clever moves but willingly carry out stupid patterns. These guards and attendants were keyed to keeping out anyone who tried to get in—but if someone tried to keep out, obviously he must be forced to go in.

There hadn't even been a question about a lack of Q. S. rating on the form. His vitriolic diatribe had driven it out of their minds for a moment, and if they happened to check it before they stamped the order completed, well, the damage would already have been done.

He would have talked with David Storm.

But Storm was not quite that co-operative. His eyes flared with wild resentment, suspicion, when the attendants ushered Kingston into the cell.

"You see, doctor," one of the attendants said with soothing irony, and not too concealed humor, "we provide you with a patient and everything. We'll move in another couch, and you two can just lie back, relax, and just tell each other all about what's in your subconscious."

"Oh, no you don't," Storm said instantly, and backed into a corner of the cell with an attitude of exaggerated rejection. "That's an old trick. Pretending to be a cell mate so you can learn my secret. That's an old trick, an old, old, old, old, o-l-d—" His lips kept moving, but the sound of his voice trailed away.

"You needn't think you're going to make me listen to your troubles," Kingston snapped at him. "I've got troubles of my own."

Storm's lips ceased moving, and he stared at Kingston without blinking.

"You big-shot scientists try to get along with one another," one of the attendants said as they went out the door.

"Scientists just argue," the other attendant commented. "They never *do* anything."

But Kingston hardly heard them, and hardly noticed them when, a few minutes later, they brought in a cot for him and placed it on the opposite side of the cell from Storm's cot. He was busy analyzing Storm's first reactions. Yes, the pattern was disturbed, possibly demented, certainly regressive—and yet, it was not so much irrational as adolescent, the bitterness of the adolescent when he first begins to really realize that the merchandise of humanity is not living up to the advertising under which it has been sold to him.

Under the attendants' watchful eyes, Kingston changed into the shapeless garments of the inmates. He flared up at them once again, carrying out his pattern of indignation that they should do this to him, but he didn't put much heart into it. No point in overdoing the act.

"Looks like he might have passed his peak," one of the attendants muttered. "He's calming down again. Maybe he won't be too hard to handle."

They went out the door again with the admonishment: "Now you fellows be quiet, and you'll get breakfast pretty soon. But if you get naughty—" With his fist and thumb he made an exaggerated motion of working a hypodermic syringe. Storm cowered back into his corner of the cell.

"I've given up trying to convince you numskulls," Kingston said with contempt. "I'll just wait now until my office hears about this."

"Yeah," the attendant said. "Yeah, you just sit tight and wait. Just keep waiting—and quiet!"

The sound of their steps receded down the hallway. Kingston lay back on his couch and said nothing. He knew Storm's eyes were on him, watching him, as nervous, excited, and wary as an animal. The cell was barren, containing only the cots covered with a tough plastic which defied tearing with the bare fingers, and a water closet. There wasn't a seat on the latter because that can be torn off and used as a weapon either against one's self or others. In the wards there would be books, magazines, games, implements of various skills and physical therapies, all under the eyes of watchful attendants; but in these cells there was nothing, because there weren't enough attendants to watch the occupants of each cell.

Kingston lay on his couch and waited. In a little while Storm came out of his corner and sat down on the edge of his own couch. His attitude was half wary, half belligerent.

"You needn't be afraid of me," Kingston said softly, and kept looking upward at the ceiling. "I really am Dr. Heidrich Kingston. I'm a psychiatrist. And I already know all about you and your secrets."

He heard a faint whimper, the rustling of garments on the plastic couch cover, as if Storm were shrinking back against the wall, as if he expected this to be the prelude to more punishment for having such secret thoughts. Then a form of reasoning seemed to prevail, and Kingston could feel the tension relaxing in the room.

"You're as crazy as I am," Storm said loudly. There was relief in his voice, and yet regret.

Kingston said nothing. There was no point in pushing it. If his luck held, he would have several days. Miss Verity could be counted on to cut her vacation short and come back ahead of time, but even with that, he should have at least three days. And while Storm was badly disoriented, he could be reached.

"And that's an old, old trick, too," Storm said in a bitter singsong. "Pretending you already know, so I'll talk. Well I'm not a commie! I'm not a traitor! I'm not any of those things. I just think—" He broke off abruptly. "Oh, no you don't!" he exclaimed. "You can't trick me into telling you what I think. That's an old, old, old, old—"

It was quite clear why the therapies used by Moss hadn't worked. Storm was obsessed with guilt. He had been working in the highest echelons of Loyalty and at the same time had been harboring secret doubts that the framework was right. The Moss therapies then were simply punishments

for his guilt, punishments which he felt he deserved, punishments which confirmed his wrongdoing. And Moss would be so convinced that Storm's thoughts were entirely wrong, that he couldn't possibly use the technique of agreement to lead Storm out of his syndrome. That was why Moss' past was stainless, why the Security Board trusted him with a Q. S., he was as narrow in his estimate of right and wrong as they.

"Old, old, old, old—" Storm kept repeating. He was stuck in the adolescent groove of bitter cynicism, not yet progressed to the point of realizing that in spite of its faults and hypocrisies, there were some elements in humanity worth a man's respect and faith. Even a thinking man.

It was a full day later before Kingston attempted the first significant move in reaching through to Storm. The previous day had confirmed the pattern of the attendants: A breakfast of adequate but plain food. Moss would never get caught on the technicality so prevalent in many institutions where the inmates can't help themselves—chiseling on food and pocketing the difference. After breakfast a clean-up of the cells and their persons. Four hours alone. Lunch. Carefully supervised and highly limited exercise period. Back to the cell again for another four hours. Supper. And soon, lights out.

It varied, somewhat, from most mental hospital routine; but these were all Q. S. men, each bearing terrible secrets which had snapped their minds. They mustn't be allowed to talk to one another. It varied, too, from patient to patient. It varied mainly in that the cells were largely soundproof; they had little of the screaming, raging, cursing, strangling, choking bedlam common in many such institutions.

Moss was a good administrator. He had his wing under thorough control. It was as humane as his limited point of view could make it. There were too few attendants, but then that was always the case in mental hospitals. In this instance it worked in Kingston's favor. There would be little chance of interruption, except at the planned times. In going into another person's mind that was a hazard to be guarded against, as potentially disastrous as a disruption of a major operation.

No reverberation of alarm at his absence from his office reached this far, and Kingston doubted there would be much. Miss Verity was more efficient than Moss and the organization she had set up would run indefinitely during his absence and hers. Decisions, which only he could make, would pile up in the staff offices, but that was nothing unusual in government.

He didn't try to rush Storm. With a combination of the facts he had gleaned from the file and the empathy he possessed, he lay on his cot and talked quietly to the ceiling about Storm. His childhood, his days in school, his attitudes toward his parents, teachers, scout masters, all the carefully tailored and planned sociology surrounding growing youth in respectable circumstances of today. It was called planned youth development, but it could better be called youth suppression, for its object

was to quell any divergent tendencies, make the youth docile and complaisant—a good boy, which meant no trouble to anybody.

He translated the standard pattern into specifics about Storm, for obviously, until his breakup, David had been the epitome of a model boy. There are several standard patterns of reaction to this procedure. Eager credulity, where the individual is looking for a concrete father image to carry his burdens; rejective skepticism, where the individual seizes upon the slightest discrepancy to prove the speaker cannot know; occasionally superstitious fear and awe; and even less occasionally a comprehension of how gestalt empathy works. But whatever the pattern of reaction, it is the rare person, indeed, who can keep from listening to an analysis of himself.

Storm lay on his side on his cot, facing Kingston—a good sign because the previous day he had faced the wall—and watched the older man talk quietly and easily at the ceiling. Kingston knew when he came close to dangerous areas from the catch in Storm's breathing, but there was no other sign. Deliberately he broke off in the middle of telling Storm what his reactions had been at the bull session where the radical had been talking.

There was about ten minutes of silence. Several times there was an indrawn breath, as if Storm were starting to say something. But he kept quiet. Kingston picked up the thread and continued on, as if no time had elapsed.

He got his reward during the exercise period. Storm kept close to him, manifestly preferred his company to that of the attendants. They were among the less self-destructive few who were allowed a little time at handball. The previous day Storm had swung on the ball, wildly, angrily, as if to work off some terrible rage by hitting the ball. There hadn't been even the excuse of a game. Storm, younger and quicker, much more intense, had kept the ball to himself. Today Storm seemed the opposite. The few times he did hit the ball he deliberately placed it where Kingston could get it easily. Then he lost interest and sat down in a corner of the court. The attendants hustled them out quickly, to make room for others.

Back in the cell, Kingston picked up the thread again. Genuine accomplishment in gestalt empathy allows one to enter directly into another man's mind; his whole life is laid open for reading. Specific events are often obscure, but the man's pattern of reactions to events, the psychological reality of it, is open to view. Kingston narrated, with neither implied criticism nor praise, until, midafternoon, he sprang a bombshell.

"But you were wrong about one thing, Storm," he said abruptly. He felt Storm's instant withdrawal, the return of hostility. "You thought you were alone. You thought you were the only one with this terrible flaw in your nature. But you were not alone, son. And you aren't alone now.

"You put your finger on the major dilemma facing science today."

Now, for the first time, he glanced over at Storm. The young man was up on his elbow, staring at Kingston with an expression of horror. As

easily as that, his secret had come out. And he did not doubt that Kingston knew his thoughts. The rest of it had fitted, and this fitted, too. He began to weep, at first quietly, then with great, wracking sobs.

"Disgrace," he muttered. "Disgrace, disgrace, disgrace. My mother, my father—" He buried his face in his arms. His whole body shook. He turned his face to the wall.

"All over the world, the genuine men of science are fighting out these same problems, David," Kingston said. "You are not alone."

Storm started to put his hands over his ears—then took them away. Kingston appeared not to notice.

"Politicians, not only ours, but all over the world, have discovered that science is a tremendous weapon. As with any other weapon they have seized it and turned it to their use. But it would be a great mistake to cast the politician in the role of villain. He is not a villain. He simply operates in an entirely different framework from that of science.

"Science does not understand his framework. A man of science grows extremely cautious with his words. He makes no claims he cannot substantiate. He freely admits it when he does not know something. He would be horrified to recommend the imposition of a mere theory of conduct upon a culture. The politician is not bothered by any of this. He has no hesitancy in recommending what he believes be imposed upon a culture; whatever is necessary for him to get the votes he will say.

"The scientist states again and again that saying a thing is true will not make it true. In classical physics this may have been accurate, although there is doubt of its truth in relative physics, and it is manifestly untrue in the living sciences. For often the politician says a thing with such a positive strength of confidence that the people begin operating in a framework of its truth and so implement it that it does become true.

"The public follows the politician by preference. Most of us have never outgrown our emotional childhood, and when the silver cord, the apron strings are broken from our real parents, we set about trying to find parent substitutes to bear the responsibility for our lives. The scientist stands in uncertainty, without panaceas, without sure-fire solutions of how to have all we want and think we want. The politician admits to no such uncertainties. He becomes an excellent father substitute. He will take care of us, bear the brunt of responsibility for us.

"But this clash of frameworks goes much deeper than that. Just as the scientist cannot understand the politician, so the politician does not understand science. Like most people, to him the scientist is just a super trained mechanic. He's learned how to manipulate some laboratory equipment. He has memorized some vague and mysterious higher math formulae. But he's just a highly skilled mechanic, and, as such, is employed by the politician to do a given job. He is not expected to meddle in things which are none of his concern.

"But in science we know this is a false estimation. For science is far

more than the development of a skill. It is a frame of thought, a philosophy, a way of life. That was the source of your conflict, son. You were trying to operate in the field of science under the politician's estimation of what it is.

"The scientist is human. He loves his home, his flag, his country. Like any other man he wishes to protect and preserve them. But the political rules under which he is expected to do this come in direct conflict with his basic philosophy and approach to enlightenment. We have one framework, then, forced to make itself subservient to another framework, and the points of difference between the two are so great, that tremendous inner conflicts are aroused.

"The problem is not insuperable. Science has dealt with such problems before. Without risk to home, flag and country, science will find a way to deal with this dilemma, also. You are not alone."

There was a long silence, and then Storm spoke, quite rationally, from his cot.

"That's all very nice," he said, "but there's one thing wrong with it. You're just as crazy as I am, or you wouldn't be here."

Kingston looked over at him and laughed.

"Now you're thinking like the politician, Storm," he said. "You're taking the evidence and saying it can have only one possible interpretation." He was tempted to tell Storm the truth of why he was here, and to show him that science could find a way, without harm, to circumvent the too narrow restrictions placed upon it by the political mind. But that would be unwise. Better never to let anyone know how he had manipulated it so that a simple clerical error could account for the whole chain of events.

"I really am Dr. Heidrich Kingston," he said.

"Yeah," Storm agreed, too quickly. There was derision in his eyes, but there was also pity. That was a good sign, too. Storm was showing evidence that he could think of the plight of someone else, other than himself. "Yeah, sure you are," he added.

"You don't think so, now," Kingston laughed. "But tomorrow, or the next day, my secretary will come to the door, there, and get me out of here."

"Yeah, sure. Tomorrow—or the next day." Storm agreed. "You just go on thinking that, fellow. It helps, believe me, it helps."

"And shortly afterwards you'll be released, too. Because there's no point now in keeping you locked up, incommunicado. I know all about your secrets, you see."

"Yeah," Storm breathed softly. "Tomorrow or the next day, or the day after that, or the day after— Yeah, I think I'll believe it, too, fellow. Yeah, got to believe in something."

In a limited fashion the patterns of human conduct can be accurately predicted. Cause leads to effect in the lives of human beings, just as it does in the physical sciences. The old fellow who had once told Storm

that the universe does not hand out printed instructions on how it is put together was only literally correct. Figuratively, he was in error, for the universe does bear the imprints of precisely how it is put together and operates. It is the business of science to learn to read those imprints and know their meanings. Life is a part of the universe, bearing imprints of how it operates, too. And we already read them, after a limited fashion. We couldn't have an organized society, at all, if this were not true.

Kingston had made some movement beyond generalized quantum theory, and could predict the given movements of certain individuals in the total motion of human affairs.

Faithful to the last drawn line on the charted pattern, it was the next morning that Miss Verity, with clenched jaws and pale face, stepped through the cell door, followed by a very worried and incredulous guard.

"Dr. Kingston," she said firmly, then faltered. She stood silent for an instant, fighting to subdue her relief, anger, exasperation, tears. She won. She did not break through the reserve she treasured. She spoke then, quite in the secretarial manner, but she could not subdue a certain triumph in her eyes.

"Dr. Kingston," she repeated, "it seems that while I was on my vacation, you made a . . . ah . . . clerical error."

A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ

by Walter M. Miller, Jr.

Brother Francis Gerard of Utah would never have discovered the sacred document, had it not been for the pilgrim with girded loins who appeared during that young monk's Lenten fast in the desert. Never before had Brother Francis actually seen a pilgrim with girded loins, but that this one was the bona fide article he was convinced at a glance. The pilgrim was a spindly old fellow with a staff, a basket hat, and a brushy beard, stained yellow about the chin. He walked with a limp and carried a small waterskin over one shoulder. His loins truly were girded with a ragged piece of dirty burlap, his only clothing except for hat and sandals. He whistled tunelessly on his way.

The pilgrim came shuffling down the broken trail out of the north, and he seemed to be heading toward the Brothers of Leibowitz Abbey six miles to the south. The pilgrim and the monk noticed each other across an expanse of ancient rubble. The pilgrim stopped whistling and stared. The monk, because of certain implications of the rule of solitude for fast days, quickly averted his gaze and continued about his business of hauling large rocks with which to complete the wolf-proofing of his temporary shelter. Somewhat weakened by a ten day diet of cactus fruit, Brother Francis found the work made him exceedingly dizzy; the landscape had been shimmering before his eyes and dancing with black specks, and he was at first uncertain that the bearded apparition was not a mirage

induced by hunger, but after a moment it called to him cheerfully, "*Ola allay!*"

It was a pleasant musical voice.

The rule of silence forbade the young monk to answer, except by smiling shyly at the ground.

"Is this here the road to the abbey?" the wanderer asked.

The novice nodded at the ground and reached down for a chalk-like fragment of stone. The pilgrim picked his way toward him through the rubble. "What you doing with all the rocks?" he wanted to know.

The monk knelt and hastily wrote the words "Solitude & Silence" on a large flat rock, so that the pilgrim—if he could read, which was statistically unlikely—would know that he was making himself an occasion of sin for the penitent and would perhaps have the grace to leave in peace.

"Oh, well," said the pilgrim. He stood there for a moment, looking around, then rapped a certain large rock with his staff. "*That* looks like a handy crag for you," he offered helpfully, then added: "Well, good luck. And may you find a Voice, as y' seek."

Now Brother Francis had no immediate intuition that the stranger meant "Voice" with a capital V, but merely assumed that the old fellow had mistaken him for a deaf mute. He glanced up once again as the pilgrim shuffled away whistling, sent a swift silent benediction after him for safe wayfaring, and went back to his rock-work, building a coffin-sized enclosure in which he might sleep at night without offering himself as wolf-bait.

A sky-herd of cumulus clouds, on their way to bestow moist blessings on the mountains after having cruelly tempted the desert, offered welcome respite from the searing sunlight, and he worked rapidly to finish before they were gone again. He punctuated his labors with whispered prayers for the certainty of a true Vocation, for this was the purpose of his inward quest while fasting in the desert.

At last he hoisted the rock which the pilgrim had suggested.

The color of exertion drained quickly from his face. He backed away a step and dropped the stone as if he had uncovered a serpent.

A rusted metal box lay half-crushed in the rubble . . . only a rusted metal box.

He moved toward it curiously, then paused. There were things, and then there were Things. He crossed himself hastily, and muttered brief Latin at the heavens. Thus fortified, he readdressed himself to the box.

"*Apage Satanas!*"

He threatened it with the heavy crucifix of his rosary.

"Depart, O Foul Seductor!"

He sneaked a tiny aspergillum from his robes and quickly spattered the box with holy water before it could realize what he was about.

"If thou be creature of the Devil, begone!"

The box showed no signs of withering, exploding, melting away. It ex-

uded no blasphemous ichor. It only lay quietly in its place and allowed the desert wind to evaporate the sanctifying droplets.

"So be it," said the brother, and knelt to extract it from its lodging. He sat down on the rubble and spent nearly an hour battering it open with a stone. The thought crossed his mind that such an archeological relic—for such it obviously was—might be the Heaven-sent sign of his vocation but he suppressed the notion as quickly as it occurred to him. His abbot had warned him sternly against expecting any direct personal Revelation of a spectacular nature. Indeed, he had gone forth from the abbey to fast and do penance for 40 days that he might be rewarded with the inspiration of a calling to Holy Orders, but to expect a vision or a voice crying "Francis, where art thou?" would be a vain presumption. Too many novices had returned from their desert vigils with tales of omens and signs and visions in the heavens, and the good abbot had adopted a firm policy regarding these. Only the Vatican was qualified to decide the authenticity of such things. "An attack of sunstroke is no indication that you are fit to profess the solemn vows of the order," he had growled. And certainly it was true that only rarely did a call from Heaven come through any device other than the *inward* ear, as a gradual congealing of inner certainty.

Nevertheless, Brother Francis found himself handling the old metal box with as much reverence as was possible while battering at it.

It opened suddenly, spilling some of its contents. He stared for a long time before daring to touch, and a cool thrill gathered along his spine. Here was antiquity indeed! And as a student of archeology, he could scarcely believe his wavering vision. Brother Jeris would be frantic with envy, he thought, but quickly repented this unkindness and murmured his thanks to the sky for such a treasure.

He touched the articles gingerly—they were real enough—and began sorting through them. His studies had equipped him to recognize a screwdriver—an instrument once used for twisting threaded bits of metal into wood—and a pair of cutters with blades no longer than his thumbnail, but strong enough to cut soft bits of metal or bone. There was an odd tool with a rotted wooden handle and a heavy copper tip to which a few flakes of molten lead had adhered, but he could make nothing of it. There was a toroidal roll of gummy black stuff, too far deteriorated by the centuries for him to identify. There were strange bits of metal, broken glass, and an assortment of tiny tubular things with wire whiskers of the type prized by the hill pagans as charms and amulets, but thought by some archeologists to be remnants of the legendary *machina analytica*, supposedly dating back to the Deluge of Flame. All these and more he examined carefully and spread on the wide flat stone. The documents he saved until last. The documents, as always, were the real prize, for so few papers had survived the angry bonfires of the Age of Simplification, when even the

sacred writings had curled and blackened and withered into smoke while ignorant crowds howled vengeance.

Two large folded papers and three hand-scribbled notes constituted his find. All were cracked and brittle with age, and he handled them tenderly, shielding them from the wind with his robe. They were scarcely legible and scrawled in the hasty characters of pre-Deluge English—a tongue now used, together with Latin, only by monastics and in the Holy Ritual. He spelled it out slowly, recognizing words but uncertain of meanings. One note said: *Pound pastrami, can kraut, six bagels, for Emma.* Another ordered: *Don't forget to pick up form 1040 for Uncle Revenue.* The third note was only a column of figures with a circled total from which another amount was subtracted and finally a percentage taken, followed by the word *damn!* From this he could deduce nothing, except to check the arithmetic, which proved correct.

Of the two larger papers, one was tightly rolled and began to fall to pieces when he tried to open it; he could make out the words RACING FORM, but nothing more. He laid it back in the box for later restorative work.

The second large paper was a single folded sheet, whose creases were so brittle that he could only inspect a little of it by parting the folds and peering between them as best he could.

A diagram . . . a web of white lines on dark paper!

Again the cool thrill gathered along his spine. It was a *blueprint*—that exceedingly rare class of ancient document most prized by students of antiquity, and usually most challenging to interpreters and searchers for meaning.

And, as if the find itself were not enough of a blessing, among the words written in a block at the lower corner of the document was the name of the founder of his order—of the Blessed Leibowitz *himself!*

His trembling hands threatened to tear the paper in their happy agitation. The parting words of the pilgrim tumbled back to him: "May you find a Voice, as y' seek." Voice indeed, with V capitalized and formed by the wings of a descending dove and illuminated in three colors against a background of gold leaf. V as in *Vere dignum* and *Vidi aquam,* at the head of a page of the Missal. V, he saw quite clearly, as in Vocation.

He stole another glance to make certain it was so, then breathed, "*Beate Leibowitz, ora pro me. . . . Sancte Leibowitz, exaudi me,*" the second invocation being a rather daring one, since the founder of his order had not yet been declared a saint.

Forgetful of his abbot's warning, he climbed quickly to his feet and stared across the shimmering terrain to the south in the direction taken by the old wanderer of the burlap loincloth. But the pilgrim had long since vanished. Surely an angel of God, if not the Blessed Leibowitz himself, for had he not revealed this miraculous treasure by pointing out the rock to be moved and murmuring that prophetic farewell?

Brother Francis stood basking in his awe until the sun lay red on the hills and evening threatened to engulf him in its shadows. At last he stirred, and reminded himself of the wolves. His gift included no guarantee of charismata for subduing the wild beast, and he hastened to finish his enclosure before darkness fell on the desert. When the stars came out, he rekindled his fire and gathered his daily repast of the small purple cactus fruit, his only nourishment except the handful of parched corn brought to him by the priest each Sabbath. Sometimes he found himself staring hungrily at the lizards which scurried over the rocks, and was troubled by gluttonous nightmares.

But tonight his hunger was less troublesome than an impatient urge to run back to the abbey and announce his wondrous encounter to his brethren. This, of course, was unthinkable. Vocation or no, he must remain here until the end of Lent, and continue as if nothing extraordinary had occurred.

A *cathedral will be built upon this site,* he thought dreamily as he sat by the fire. He could see it rising from the rubble of the ancient village, magnificent spires visible for miles across the desert. . . .

But cathedrals were for teeming masses of people. The desert was home for only scattered tribes of huntsmen and the monks of the abbey. He settled in his dreams for a shrine, attracting rivers of pilgrims with girded loins. . . . He drowsed. When he awoke, the fire was reduced to glowing embers. Something seemed amiss. Was he quite alone? He blinked about at the darkness.

From beyond the bed of reddish coals, the dark wolf blinked back. The monk yelped and dived for cover.

The yelp, he decided as he lay trembling within his den of stones, had not been a serious breach of the rule of silence. He lay hugging the metal box and praying for the days of Lent to pass swiftly, while the sound of padded feet scratched about the enclosure.

Each night the wolves prowled about his camp, and the darkness was full of their howling. The days were glaring nightmares of hunger, heat, and scorching sun. He spent them at prayer and wood-gathering, trying to suppress his impatience for the coming of Holy Saturday's high noon, the end of Lent and of his vigil.

But when at last it came, Brother Francis found himself too famished for jubilation. Wearily he packed his pouch, pulled up his cowl against the sun, and tucked his precious box beneath one arm. Thirty pounds lighter and several degrees weaker than he had been on Ash Wednesday, he staggered the six mile stretch to the abbey where he fell exhausted before its gates. The brothers who carried him in and bathed him and shaved him and anointed his desiccated tissues reported that he babbled incessantly in his delirium about an apparition in a burlap loincloth, addressing it at times as an angel and again as a saint, frequently invoking

the name of Leibowitz and thanking him for a revelation of sacred relics and a racing form.

Such reports filtered through the monastic congregation and soon reached the ears of the abbot, whose eyes immediately narrowed to slits and whose jaw went rigid with the rock of policy.

"Bring him," growled that worthy priest in a tone that sent a recorder scurrying.

The abbot paced and gathered his ire. It was not that he objected to miracles, as such, if duly investigated, certified, and sealed; for miracles —even though always incompatible with administrative efficiency, and the abbot was administrator as well as priest—were the bedrock stuff on which his faith was founded. But last year there had been Brother Noyen with his miraculous hangman's noose, and the year before that, Brother Smirnov who had been mysteriously cured of the gout upon handling a probable relic of the Blessed Leibowitz, and the year before that . . . *Faugh!* The incidents had been too frequent and outrageous to tolerate. Ever since Leibowitz' beatification, the young fools had been sniffing around after shreds of the miraculous like a pack of good-natured hounds scratching eagerly at the back gate of Heaven for scraps.

It was quite understandable, but also quite unbearable. Every monastic order is eager for the canonization of its founder, and delighted to produce any bit of evidence to serve the cause in advocacy. But the abbot's flock was getting out of hand, and their zeal for miracles was making the Albertian Order of Leibowitz a laughing stock at New Vatican. He had determined to make any new bearers of miracles suffer the consequences, either as a punishment for impetuous and impertinent credulity, or as payment in penance for a gift of grace in case of later verification.

By the time the young novice knocked at his door, the abbot had projected himself into the desired state of carnivorous expectancy beneath a bland exterior.

"Come in, my son," he breathed softly.

"You sent for . . ." The novice paused, smiling happily as he noticed the familiar metal box on the abbot's table. ". . . for me, Father Juan?" he finished.

"Yes . . ." The abbot hesitated. His voice smiled with a withering acid, adding: "Or perhaps you would prefer that I come *to you*, hereafter, since you've become such a famous personage."

"Oh, no, Father!" Brother Francis reddened and gulped.

"You are seventeen, and plainly an idiot."

"That is undoubtedly true, Father."

"What improbable excuse can you propose for your outrageous vanity in believing yourself fit for Holy Orders?"

"I can offer none, my ruler and teacher. My sinful pride is unpardonable."

"To imagine that it is so great as to be unpardonable is even a vaster vanity," the priest roared.

"Yes, Father. I am indeed a worm."

The abbot smiled icily and resumed his watchful calm. "And you are now ready to deny your feverish ravings about an angel appearing to reveal to you this . . ." He gestured contemptuously at the box. ". . . this assortment of junk?"

Brother Francis gulped and closed his eyes. "I—I fear I cannot deny it, my master."

"What?"

"I cannot deny what I have seen, Father."

"Do you know what is going to happen to you now?"

"Yes, Father."

"Then prepare to take it!"

With a patient sigh, the novice gathered up his robes about his waist and bent over the table. The good abbot produced his stout hickory ruler from the drawer and whacked him soundly ten times across the bare buttocks. After each whack, the novice dutifully responded with a "*Deo Gratias!*" for this lesson in the virtue of humility.

"Do you *now* retract it?" the abbot demanded as he rolled down his sleeve.

"Father, I cannot."

The priest turned his back and was silent for a moment. "Very well," he said tersely. "Go. But do not expect to profess your solemn vows this season with the others."

Brother Francis returned to his cell in tears. His fellow novices would join the ranks of the professed monks of the order, while he must wait another year—and spend another Lenten season among the wolves in the desert, seeking a vocation which he felt had already been granted to him quite emphatically. As the weeks passed, however, he found some satisfaction in noticing that Father Juan had not been entirely serious in referring to his find as "an assortment of junk." The archeological relics aroused considerable interest among the brothers, and much time was spent at cleaning the tools, classifying them, restoring the documents to a pliable condition, and attempting to ascertain their meaning. It was even whispered among the novices that Brother Francis had discovered true relics of the Blessed Leibowitz—especially in the form of the blueprint bearing the legend OP COBBLESTONE, REQ LEIBOWITZ & HARDIN, which was stained with several brown splotches which might have been his blood—or equally likely, as the abbot pointed out, might be stains from a decayed apple core. But the print was dated in the Year of Grace 1956, which was—as nearly as could be determined—during that venerable man's lifetime, a lifetime now obscured by legend and myth, so that it was hard to determine any but a few facts about the man.

It was said that God, in order to test mankind, had commanded wise

men of that age, among them the Blessed Leibowitz, to perfect diabolic weapons and give them into the hands of latter-day Pharaohs. And with such weapons Man had, within the span of a few weeks, destroyed most of his civilization and wiped out a large part of the population. After the Deluge of Flame came the plagues, the madness, and the bloody inception of the Age of Simplification when the furious remnants of humanity had torn politicians, technicians, and men of learning limb from limb, and burned all records that might contain information that could once more lead into paths of destruction. Nothing had been so fiercely hated as the written word, the learned man. It was during this time that the word *simpleton* came to mean *honest, upright, virtuous citizen,* a concept once denoted by the term *common man.*

To escape the righteous wrath of the surviving simpletons, many scientists and learned men fled to the only sanctuary which would try to offer them protection. Holy Mother Church received them, vested them in monks' robes, tried to conceal them from the mobs. Sometimes the sanctuary was effective; more often it was not. Monasteries were invaded, records and sacred books were burned, refugees seized and hanged. Leibowitz had fled to the Cistercians, professed their vows, become a priest, and after twelve years had won permission from the Holy See to found a new monastic order to be called "the Albertians," after St. Albert the Great, teacher of Aquinas and patron saint of scientists. The new order was to be dedicated to the preservation of knowledge, secular and sacred, and the duty of the brothers was to memorize such books and papers as could be smuggled to them from all parts of the world. Leibowitz was at last identified by simpletons as a former scientist, and was martyred by hanging; but the order continued, and when it became safe again to possess written documents, many books were transcribed from memory. Precedence, however, had been given to sacred writings, to history, the humanities, and social sciences—since the memories of the memorizers were limited, and few of the brothers were trained to understand the physical sciences. From the vast store of human knowledge, only a pitiful collection of hand-written books remained.

Now, after six centuries of darkness, the monks still preserved it, studied it, re-copied it, and waited. It mattered not in the least to them that the knowledge they saved was useless—and some of it even incomprehensible. The knowledge was there, and it was their duty to save it, and it would still be with them if the darkness in the world lasted ten thousand years.

Brother Francis Gerard of Utah returned to the desert the following year and fasted again in solitude. Once more he returned, weak and emaciated, to be confronted by the abbot, who demanded to know if he claimed further conferences with members of the Heavenly Host, or was prepared to renounce his story of the previous year.

"I cannot help what I have seen, my teacher," the lad repeated.

Once more did the abbot chastise him in Christ, and once more did he postpone his profession. The document, however, had been forwarded to a seminary for study, after a copy had been made. Brother Francis remained a novice, and continued to dream wistfully of the shrine which might someday be built upon the site of his find.

"Stubborn boy!" fumed the abbot. "Why didn't somebody else see his silly pilgrim, if the slovenly fellow was heading for the abbey as he said? One more escapade for the Devil's Advocate to cry hoax about. Burlap loincloth indeed!"

The burlap had been troubling the abbot, for tradition related that Leibowitz had been hanged with a burlap bag for a hood.

Brother Francis spent seven years in the novitiate, seven Lenten vigils in the desert, and became highly proficient in the imitation of wolf-calls. For the amusement of his brethren, he would summon the pack to the vicinity of the abbey by howling from the walls after dark. By day, he served in the kitchen, scrubbed the stone floors, and continued his studies of the ancients.

Then one day a messenger from the seminary came riding to the abbey on an ass, bearing tidings of great joy. "It is known," said the messenger, "that the documents found near here are authentic as to date of origin, and that the blueprint was somehow connected with your founder's work. It's being sent to New Vatican for further study."

"Possibly a true relic of Leibowitz, then?" the abbot asked calmly.

But the messenger could not commit himself to that extent, and only raised a shrug of one eyebrow. "It is said that Leibowitz was a widower at the time of his ordination. If the name of his deceased wife could be discovered . . ."

The abbot recalled the note in the box concerning certain articles of food for a woman, and he too shrugged an eyebrow.

Soon afterwards, he summoned Brother Francis into his presence. "My boy," said the priest, actually beaming, "I believe the time has come for you to profess your solemn vows. And may I commend you for your patience and persistence. We shall speak no more of your, ah . . . encounter with the, ah, desert wanderer. You are a good simpleton. You may kneel for my blessing, if you wish."

Brother Francis sighed and fell forward in a dead faint. The abbot blessed him and revived him, and he was permitted to profess the solemn vows of the Albertian Brothers of Leibowitz, swearing himself to perpetual poverty, chastity, obedience, and observance of the rule.

Soon afterwards, he was assigned to the copying room, apprentice under an aged monk named Horner, where he would undoubtedly spend the rest of his days illuminating the pages of algebra texts with patterns of olive leaves and cheerful cherubim.

"You have five hours a week," croaked his aged overseer, "which you

may devote to an approved project of your own choosing, if you wish. If not, the time will be assigned to copying the *Summa Theologica* and such fragmentary copies of the Britannica as exist."

The young monk thought it over, then asked: "May I have the time for elaborating a beautiful copy of the Leibowitz blueprint?"

Brother Horner frowned doubtfully. "I don't know, son—our good abbot is rather sensitive on this subject. I'm afraid . . ."

Brother Francis begged him earnestly.

"Well, perhaps," the old man said reluctantly. "It seems like a rather brief project, so—I'll permit it."

The young monk selected the finest lambskin available and spent many weeks curing it and stretching it and stoning it to a perfect surface, bleached to a snowy whiteness. He spent more weeks at studying copies of his precious document in every detail, so that he knew each tiny line and marking in the complicated web of geometric markings and mystifying symbols. He pored over it until he could see the whole amazing complexity with his eyes closed. Additional weeks were spent searching painstakingly through the monastery's library for any information at all that might lead to some glimmer of understanding of the design.

Brother Jeris, a young monk who worked with him in the copy room and who frequently teased him about miraculous encounters in the desert, came to squint at it over his shoulder and asked: "What, pray, is the meaning of *Transistorized Control System for Unit Six-B?*"

"Clearly, it is the name of the thing which this diagram represents," said Francis, a trifle crossly since Jeris had merely read the title of the document aloud.

"Surely," said Jeris. "But what is the thing the diagram represents?"

"The transistorized control system for unit six-B, obviously."

Jeris laughed mockingly.

Brother Francis reddened. "I should imagine," said he, "that it represents an abstract concept, rather than a concrete *thing*. It's clearly not a recognizable picture of an object, unless the form is so stylized as to require special training to see it. In my opinion, *Transistorized Control System* is some high abstraction of transcendental value."

"Pertaining to what field of learning?" asked Jeris, still smiling smugly.

"Why . . ." Brother Francis paused. "Since our Beatus Leibowitz was an electronicist prior to his profession and ordination, I suppose the concept applies to the lost art called *electronics*."

"So it is written. But what was the subject matter of that art, Brother?"

"That too is written. The subject matter of electronics was the Electron, which one fragmentary source defines as a Negative Twist of Nothingness."

"I am impressed by your astuteness," said Jeris. "Now perhaps you can tell me how to negate nothingness?"

Brother Francis reddened slightly and squirmed for a reply.

"A negation of nothingness should yield somethingness, I suppose," Jeris continued. "So the Electron must have been a twist of *something.* Unless the negation applies to the 'twist,' and then we would be 'Untwisting Nothing,' eh?" He chuckled. "How clever they must have been, these ancients. I suppose if you keep at it, Francis, you will learn how to untwist a nothing, and then we shall have the Electron in our midst. Where would we put it? On the high altar, perhaps?"

"I couldn't say," Francis answered stiffly. "But I have a certain faith that the Electron must have existed at one time, even though I can't say how it was constructed or what it might have been used for."

The iconoclast laughed mockingly and returned to his work. The incident saddened Francis, but did not turn him from his devotion to his project.

As soon as he had exhausted the library's meager supply of information concerning the lost art of the Albertians' founder, he began preparing preliminary sketches of the designs he meant to use on the lambskin. The diagram itself, since its meaning was obscure, would be redrawn precisely as it was in the blueprint, and penned in coal-black lines. The lettering and numbering, however, he would translate into a more decorative and colorful script than the plain block letters used by the ancients. And the text contained in a square block marked SPECIFICATIONS would be distributed pleasingly around the borders of the document, upon scrolls and shields supported by doves and cherubim. He would make the black lines of the diagram less stark and austere by imagining the geometric tracery to be a trellis, and decorate it with green vines and golden fruit, birds and perhaps a wily serpent. At the very top would be a representation of the Triune God, and at the bottom the coat of arms of the Albertian Order. Thus was the Transistorized Control System of the Blessed Leibowitz to be glorified and rendered appealing to the eye as well as to the intellect.

When he had finished the preliminary sketch, he showed it shyly to Brother Horner for suggestions or approval. "I can see," said the old man a bit remorsefully, "that your project is not to be as brief as I had hoped. But . . . continue with it anyhow. The design is beautiful, beautiful indeed."

"Thank you, Brother."

The old man leaned close to wink confidentially. "I've heard the case for Blessed Leibowitz' canonization has been speeded up, so possibly our dear abbot is less troubled by you-know-what than he previously was."

The news of the speed-up was, of course, happily received by all monastics of the order. Leibowitz' beatification had long since been effected, but the final step in declaring him to be a saint might require many more years, even though the case was under way; and indeed there was the possibility that the Devil's Advocate might uncover evidence to prevent the canonization from occurring at all.

Many months after he had first conceived the project, Brother Francis began actual work on the lambskin. The intricacies of scrollwork, the excruciatingly delicate work of inlaying the gold leaf, the hair-fine detail, made it a labor of years; and when his eyes began to trouble him, there were long weeks when he dared not touch it at all for fear of spoiling it with one little mistake. But slowly, painfully, the ancient diagram was becoming a blaze of beauty. The brothers of the abbey gathered to watch and murmur over it, and some even said that the inspiration of it was proof enough of his alleged encounter with the pilgrim who might have been Blessed Leibowitz.

"I can't see why you don't spend your time on a *useful* project," was Brother Jeris' comment, however. The skeptical monk had been using his own free-project time to make and decorate sheepskin shades for the oil lamps in the chapel.

Brother Horner, the old master copyist, had fallen ill. Within weeks, it became apparent that the well-loved monk was on his deathbed. In the midst of the monastery's grief, the abbot quietly appointed Brother Jeris as master of the copy room.

A Mass of Burial was chanted early in Advent, and the remains of the holy old man were committed to the earth of their origin. On the following day, Brother Jeris informed Brother Francis that he considered it about time for him to put away the things of a child and start doing a man's work. Obediently, the monk wrapped his precious project in parchment, protected it with heavy board, shelved it, and began producing sheepskin lampshades. He made no murmur of protest, and contented himself with realizing that someday the soul of Brother Jeris would depart by the same road as that of Brother Horner, to begin the life for which this copy room was but the staging ground; and afterwards, please God, he might be allowed to complete his beloved document.

Providence, however, took an earlier hand in the matter. During the following summer, a monsignor with several clerks and a donkey train came riding into the abbey and announced that he had come from New Vatican, as Leibowitz advocate in the canonization proceedings, to investigate such evidence as the abbey could produce that might have bearing on the case, including an alleged apparition of the beatified which had come to one Francis Gerard of Utah.

The gentleman was warmly greeted, quartered in the suite reserved for visiting prelates, lavishly served by six young monks responsive to his every whim, of which he had very few. The finest wines were opened, the huntsman snared the plumpest quail and chaparral cocks, and the advocate was entertained each evening by fiddlers and a troupe of clowns, although the visitor persisted in insisting that life go on as usual at the abbey.

On the third day of his visit, the abbot sent for Brother Francis. "Monsignor di Simone wishes to see you," he said. "If you let your im-

agination run away with you, boy, we'll use your gut to string a fiddle, feed your carcass to the wolves, and bury the bones in unhallowed ground. Now get along and see the good gentleman."

Brother Francis needed no such warning. Since he had awakened from his feverish babblings after his first Lenten fast in the desert, he had never mentioned the encounter with the pilgrim except when asked about it, nor had he allowed himself to speculate any further concerning the pilgrim's identity. That the pilgrim might be a matter for high ecclesiastical concern frightened him a little, and his knock was timid at the monsignor's door.

His fright proved unfounded. The monsignor was a suave and diplomatic elder who seemed keenly interested in the small monk's career.

"Now about your encounter with our blessed founder," he said after some minutes of preliminary amenities.

"Oh, but I never said he was our Blessed Leibo—"

"Of course you didn't, my son. Now I have here an account of it, as gathered from other sources, and I would like you to read it, and either confirm it or correct it." He paused to draw a scroll from his case and handed it to Francis. "The sources for this version, of course, had it on hearsay only," he added, "and only *you* can describe it first hand, so I want you to edit it *most* scrupulously."

"Of course. What happened was really very simple, Father."

But it was apparent from the fatness of the scroll that the hearsay account was not so simple. Brother Francis read with mounting apprehension which soon grew to the proportions of pure horror.

"You look white, my son. Is something wrong?" asked the distinguished priest.

"This . . . this . . . it wasn't like this *at all!*" gasped Francis. "He didn't say more than a few words to me. I only saw him once. He just asked me the way to the abbey and tapped the rock where I found the relics."

"No heavenly choir?"

"Oh, no!"

"And it's not true about the nimbus and the carpet of roses that grew up along the road where he walked?"

"As God is my judge, nothing like that happened at all!"

"Ah, well," sighed the advocate. "Travelers' stories are always exaggerated."

He seemed saddened, and Francis hastened to apologize, but the advocate dismissed it as of no great importance to the case. "There are other miracles, carefully documented," he explained, "and anyway—there is one bit of good news about the documents you discovered. We've unearthed the name of the wife who died before our founder came to the order."

"Yes?"

"Yes. It was Emily."

Despite his disappointment with Brother Francis' account of the pilgrim, Monsignor di Simone spent five days at the site of the find. He was accompanied by an eager crew of novices from the abbey, all armed with picks and shovels. After extensive digging, the advocate returned with a small assortment of additional artifacts, and one bloated tin can that contained a desiccated mess which might once have been sauerkraut.

Before his departure, he visited the copy room and asked to see Brother Francis' copy of the famous blueprint. The monk protested that it was really nothing, and produced it with such eagerness his hands trembled.

"Zounds!" said the monsignor, or an oath to such effect. "Finish it, man, finish it!"

The monk looked smilingly at Brother Jeris. Brother Jeris swiftly turned away; the back of his neck gathered color. The following morning, Francis resumed his labors over the illuminated blueprint, with gold leaf, quills, brushes, and dyes.

And then came another donkey train from New Vatican, with a full complement of clerks and armed guards for defense against highwaymen, this time headed by a monsignor with small horns and pointed fangs (or so several novices would later have testified), who announced that he was the *Advocatus Diaboli*, opposing Leibowitz' canonization, and he was here to investigate—and perhaps fix responsibility, he hinted—for a number of incredible and hysterical rumors filtering out of the abbey and reaching even high officials at New Vatican. He made it clear that he would tolerate no romantic nonsense.

The abbot greeted him politely and offered him an iron cot in a cell with a south exposure, after apologizing for the fact that the guest suite had been recently exposed to smallpox. The monsignor was attended by his own staff, and ate mush and herbs with the monks in refectory.

"I understand you are susceptible to fainting spells," he told Brother Francis when the dread time came. "How many members of your family have suffered from epilepsy or madness?"

"None, Excellency."

"I'm not an 'Excellency,'" snapped the priest. "Now we're going to get the truth out of you." His tone implied that he considered it to be a simple straightforward surgical operation which should have been performed years ago.

"Are you aware that documents can be aged artificially?" he demanded.

Francis was not so aware.

"Did you know that Leibowitz' wife was named Emily, and that Emma is *not* a diminutive for Emily?"

Francis had not known it, but recalled from childhood that his own parents had been rather careless about what they called each other. "And if Blessed Leibowitz chose to call her Emma, then I'm sure . . ."

The monsignor exploded, and tore into Francis with semantic tooth

and nail, and left the bewildered monk wondering whether he had ever really seen a pilgrim at all.

Before the advocate's departure, he too asked to see the illuminated copy of the print, and this time the monk's hands trembled with fear as he produced it, for he might again be forced to quit the project. The monsignor only stood gazing at it however, swallowed slightly, and forced himself to nod. "Your imagery is vivid," he admitted, "but then, of course, we all knew that, didn't we?"

The monsignor's horns immediately grew shorter by an inch, and he departed the same evening for New Vatican.

The years flowed smoothly by, seaming the faces of the once young and adding gray to the temples. The perpetual labors of the monastery continued, supplying a slow trickle of copied and re-copied manuscript to the outside world. Brother Jeris developed ambitions of building a printing press, but when the abbot demanded his reasons, he could only reply, "So we can mass-produce."

"Oh? And in a world that's smug in its illiteracy, what do you intend to do with the stuff? Sell it as kindling paper to the peasants?"

Brother Jeris shrugged unhappily, and the copy room continued with pot and quill.

Then one spring, shortly before Lent, a messenger arrived with glad tidings for the order. The case for Leibowitz was complete. The College of Cardinals would soon convene, and the founder of the Albertian Order would be enrolled in the Calendar of Saints. During the time of rejoicing that followed the announcement, the abbot—now withered and in his dotage—summoned Brother Francis into his presence, and wheezed:

"His Holiness commands your presence during the canonization of Isaac Edward Leibowitz. Prepare to leave.

"Now don't faint on me again," he added querulously.

The trip to New Vatican would take at least three months, perhaps longer, the time depending on how far Brother Francis could get before the inevitable robber band relieved him of his ass, since he would be going unarmed and alone. He carried with him only a begging bowl and the illuminated copy of the Leibowitz print, praying that ignorant robbers would have no use for the latter. As a precaution, however, he wore a black patch over his right eye, for the peasants, being a superstitious lot, could often be put to flight by even a hint of the evil eye. Thus armed and equipped, he set out to obey the summons of his high priest.

Two months and some odd days later he met his robber on a mountain trail that was heavily wooded and far from any settlement. His robber was a short man, but heavy as a bull, with a glazed knob of a pate and a jaw like a block of granite. He stood in the trail with his legs spread wide and his massive arms folded across his chest, watching the approach of the little figure on the ass. The robber seemed alone, and armed only with

a knife which he did not bother to remove from his belt thong. His appearance was a disappointment, since Francis had been secretly hoping for another encounter with the pilgrim of long ago.

"Get off," said the robber.

The ass stopped in the path. Brother Francis tossed back his cowl to reveal the eye-patch, and raised a trembling finger to touch it. He began to lift the patch slowly as if to reveal something hideous that might be hidden beneath it. The robber threw back his head and laughed a laugh that might have sprung from the throat of Satan himself. Francis muttered an exorcism, but the robber seemed untouched.

"You black-sacked jeebers wore that one out years ago," he said. "Get off."

Francis smiled, shrugged, and dismounted without protest.

"A good day to you, sir," he said pleasantly. "You may take the ass. Walking will improve my health, I think." He smiled again and started away.

"Hold it," said the robber. "Strip to the buff. And let's see what's in that package."

Brother Francis touched his begging bowl and made a helpless gesture, but this brought only another scornful laugh from the robber.

"I've seen that alms-pot trick before too," he said. "The last man with a begging bowl had half a heklo of gold in his boot. Now strip."

Brother Francis displayed his sandals, but began to strip. The robber searched his clothing, found nothing, and tossed it back to him.

"Now let's see inside the package."

"It is only a document, sir," the monk protested. "Of value to no one but its owner."

"Open it."

Silently Brother Francis obeyed. The gold leaf and the colorful design flashed brilliantly in the sunlight that filtered through the foliage. The robber's craggy jaw dropped an inch. He whistled softly.

"What a pretty! Now wouldn't me woman like it to hang on the shanty wall!"

He continued to stare while the monk went slowly sick inside. *If Thou hast sent him to test me, O Lord,* he pleaded inwardly, *then help me to die like a man, for he'll get it over the dead body of Thy servant, if take it he must.*

"Wrap it up for me," the robber commanded, clamping his jaw in sudden decision.

The monk whimpered softly. "Please, sir, you would not take the work of a man's lifetime. I spent fifteen years illuminating this manuscript, and . . ."

"Well! Did it yourself, did you?" The robber threw back his head and howled again.

Francis reddened. "I fail to see the humor, sir . . ."

The robber pointed at it between guffaws. "You! Fifteen years to make a paper bauble. So that's what you do. Tell me why. Give me one good reason. For fifteen years. Ha!"

Francis stared at him in stunned silence and could think of no reply that would appease his contempt.

Gingerly, the monk handed it over. The robber took it in both hands and made as if to rip it down the center.

"*Jesus, Mary, Joseph!*" the monk screamed, and went to his knees in the trail. "For the love of God, sir!"

Softening slightly, the robber tossed it on the ground with a snicker. "Wrestle you for it."

"Anything, sir, anything!"

They squared off. The monk crossed himself and recalled that wrestling had once been a divinely sanctioned sport—and with grim faith, he marched into battle.

Three seconds later, he lay groaning on the flat of his back under a short mountain of muscle. A sharp rock seemed to be severing his spine.

"Heh heh," said the robber, and arose to claim his document.

Hands folded as if in prayer, Brother Francis scurried after him on his knees, begging at the top of his lungs.

The robber turned to snicker. "I believe you'd kiss a boot to get it back."

Francis caught up with him and fervently kissed his boot.

This proved too much for even such a firm fellow as the robber. He flung the manuscript down again with a curse and climbed aboard the monk's donkey. The monk snatched up the precious document and trotted along beside the robber, thanking him profusely and blessing him repeatedly while the robber rode away on the ass. Francis sent a glowing cross of benediction after the departing figure and praised God for the existence of such selfless robbers.

And yet when the man had vanished among the trees, he felt an aftermath of sadness. Fifteen years to make a paper bauble . . . The taunting voice still rang in his ears. Why? Tell one good reason for fifteen years.

He was unaccustomed to the blunt ways of the outside world, to its harsh habits and curt attitudes. He found his heart deeply troubled by the mocking words, and his head hung low in the cowl as he plodded along. At one time he considered tossing the document in the brush and leaving it for the rains—but Father Juan had approved his taking it as a gift, and he could not come with empty hands. Chastened, he traveled on.

The hour had come. The ceremony surged about him as a magnificent spectacle of sound and stately movement and vivid color in the majestic basilica. And when the perfectly infallible Spirit had finally been invoked, a monsignor—it was di Simone, Francis noticed, the advocate for the saint

—arose and called upon Peter to speak, through the person of Leo XXII, commanding the assemblage to hearken.

Whereupon, the Pope quietly proclaimed that Isaac Edward Leibowitz was a saint, and it was finished. The ancient and obscure technician was of the heavenly hagiarchy, and Brother Francis breathed a dutiful prayer to his new patron as the choir burst into the *Te Deum*.

The Pontiff strode quickly into the audience room where the little monk was waiting, taking Brother Francis by surprise and rendering him briefly speechless. He knelt quickly to kiss the Fisherman's ring and receive the blessing. As he arose, he found himself clutching the beautiful document behind him as if ashamed of it. The Pope's eyes caught the motion, and he smiled.

"You have brought us a gift, our son?" he asked.

The monk gulped, nodded stupidly, and brought it out. Christ's Vicar stared at it for a long time without apparent expression. Brother Francis' heart went sinking deeper as the seconds drifted by.

"It is a nothing," he blurted, "a miserable gift. I am ashamed to have wasted so much time at . . ." He choked off.

The Pope seemed not to hear him. "Do you understand the meaning of Saint Isaac's symbology?" he asked, peering curiously at the abstract design of the circuit.

Dumbly the monk shook his head.

"Whatever it means . . ." the Pope began, but broke off. He smiled and spoke of other things. Francis had been so honored not because of any official judgment concerning his pilgrim. He had been honored for his role in bringing to light such important documents and relics of the saint, for such they had been judged, regardless of the manner in which they had been found.

Francis stammered his thanks. The Pontiff gazed again at the colorful blaze of his illuminated diagram. "Whatever it means," he breathed once more, "this bit of learning, though dead, will live again." He smiled up at the monk and winked. "And we shall guard it till that day."

For the first time, the little monk noticed that the Pope had a hole in his robe. His clothing, in fact, was threadbare. The carpet in the audience room was worn through in spots, and plaster was falling from the ceiling.

But there were books on the shelves along the walls. Books of painted beauty, speaking of incomprehensible things, copied by men whose business was not to understand but to save. And the books were waiting.

"Goodby, beloved son."

And the small keeper of the flame of knowledge trudged back toward his abbey on foot. His heart was singing as he approached the robber's outpost. And if the robber happened to be taking the day off, the monk meant to sit down and wait for his return. This time he had an answer.

THE CYBER AND JUSTICE HOLMES

by Frank Riley

Cyber justice!" That's what the District Attorney had called it in his campaign speech last night.

"Cyber justice!"

Oh, hell!

Judge Walhfred Anderson threw the morning fax paper on top of the law books he had been researching for the past two hours, and stomped angrily across his chamber to the door of the courtroom.

But it was easier to throw away the paper than the image of the words:

"—and, if re-elected, I pledge to do all in my power to help replace human inefficiency with Cyber justice in the courts of this county!

"We've seen what other counties have done with Cyber judges. We've witnessed the effectiveness of cybernetic units in our own Appellate Division . . . And I can promise you twice as many prosecutions at half the cost to the taxpayers . . . with modern, streamlined Cyber justice!"

Oh, hell!

Walhfred Anderson caught a glimpse of his reflection in the oval mirror behind the coat rack. He paused, fuming, and smoothed down the few lingering strands of gray hair. The District Attorney was waiting for him out there. No use giving him the satisfaction of looking upset. Only a few moments ago, the Presiding Judge had visaphoned a warning that the D.A. had obtained a change of calendar and was going to spring a surprise case this morning . . .

The Judge cocked his bow tie at a jaunty angle, opened the neckline of his black robe enough for the pink boutonniere to peep out, and

stepped into the courtroom as sprightly as his eighty-six years would permit.

The District Attorney was an ex-football player, square-shouldered and square-jawed. He propelled himself to his feet, bowed perfunctorily and remained standing for the Pledge of Allegiance.

As the bailiff's voice repeated the pledge in an unbroken monotone, Walhfred Anderson allowed his eyes to wander to the gold-framed picture of his personal symbol of justice, Oliver Wendell Holmes. Judge Anderson winked at Justice Holmes. It was a morning ritual he had observed without fail for nearly fifty years.

This wasn't the classic picture of Justice Holmes. Not the leonine figure Walhfred Anderson had once seen in the National Gallery. The Justice Holmes on the wall of Judge Anderson's courtroom was much warmer and more human than the official portrait. It was from an old etching that showed the Justice wearing a natty grey fedora. The Justice's fabled mustaches were long and sweeping, giving him the air of a titled playboy, but his eyes were the eyes of the man who had said: "When I am dying, my last words will be—have faith and pursue the unknown end."

Those were good words to remember, when you were eighty-six. Walhfred Anderson stared wistfully at the yellowed etching, waiting for some other dearly remembered phrase to spring up between them. But Justice Holmes wasn't communicative this morning. He hadn't been for a long time.

The District Attorney's voice, threaded with sarcasm, broke into his reverie:

"If the Court pleases, I would like to call up the case of People vs. Professor Neustadt."

Walhfred Anderson accepted the file from his aging, nearsighted clerk. He saw that the case had been assigned originally to Department 42. It was the case he had been warned about by the Presiding Judge.

Walhfred Anderson struggled to focus all his attention on the complaint before him. His craggy features, once described as resembling a benign bulldog, grew rigid with concentration. The Judge had a strong sense of honor about dividing his attention in Court. A case was not just a case; it was a human being whose past, present and future were wrapped up in the charge against him.

"Your Honor," the District Attorney broke in, impatiently, "if the Court will permit, I can summarize this case very quickly . . ."

The tone of his voice implied:

A Cyber judge would speed things up around here. Feed the facts into the proprioceptor, and they'd be stored and correlated instantly.

Perhaps so, Walhfred Anderson thought, suddenly tired, though the morning was still young. At eighty-six you couldn't go on fighting and resisting much longer. Maybe he should resign, and listen to the speeches at a farewell luncheon, and let a Cyber take over. The Cybers were fast.

They ruled swiftly and surely on points of law. They separated fact from fallacy. They were not led down side avenues of justice by human frailty. Their vision was not blurred by emotion. And yet . . . Judge Anderson looked to Justice Holmes for a clarifying thought, but the Justice's eyes were opaque, inscrutable.

Judge Anderson wearily settled back in his tall chair, bracing the ache in his back against the leather padding.

"You may proceed," he told the District Attorney.

"Thank you, your Honor."

This time the edge of sarcasm was so sharp that the Clerk and Court Stenographer looked up indignantly, expecting one of the Judge's famous retorts.

The crags in the Judge's face deepened, but he remained quiet.

With a tight smile, the District Attorney picked up his notebook.

"The defendant," he began crisply, "is charged on three counts of fraud under Section 31 . . ."

"To wit," rumbled Judge Anderson, restlessly.

"To wit," snapped the D.A., "the defendant is charged with giving paid performances at a local theatre, during which he purported to demonstrate that he could take over Cyber functions and perform them more efficiently."

Walhfred Anderson felt the door closing on him. So this was why the D.A. had requested a change of calendar! What a perfect tie-in with the election campaign! He swiveled to study the defendant.

Professor Neustadt was an astonishingly thin little man; the bones of his shoulders seemed about to thrust through the padding of his cheap brown suit. His thinness, combined with a tuft of white hair at the peak of his forehead, gave him the look of a scrawny bird.

"Our investigation of this defendant," continued the D.A., "showed that his title was assumed merely for stage purposes. He has been associated with the less creditable phases of show business for many years. In his youth, he gained considerable attention as a 'quiz kid,' and later, for a time, ran his own program and syndicated column. But his novelty wore off, and he apparently created this cybernetic act to . . ."

Rousing himself to his judicial responsibility, Judge Anderson interrupted:

"Is the defendant represented by counsel?"

"Your Honor," spoke up Professor Neustadt, in a resonant, bass voice that should have come from a much larger diaphragm, "I request the Court's permission to act as my own attorney."

Walhfred Anderson saw the D.A. smile, and he surmised that the old legal truism was going through his mind: A man who defends himself has a fool for a client.

"If it's a question of finances," the Judge rumbled gently.

"It is not a question of finances. I merely wish to defend myself."

Judge Anderson was annoyed, worried. Whoever he was or claimed to be, this Professor was evidently something of a crackpot. The D.A. would tear him to small pieces, and twist the whole case into an implicit argument for Cyber judges.

"The defendant has a right to act as his own counsel," the D.A. reminded him.

"The Court is aware of that," retorted the Judge. Only the restraining eye of Oliver Wendell Holmes kept him from cutting loose on the D.A. But one more remark like that, and he'd turn his back on the Justice. After all, what right had Holmes to get stuffy at a time like this? He'd never had to contend with Cyber justice!

He motioned to the D.A. to continue with the People's case, but the Professor spoke up first:

"Your Honor, I stipulate to the prosecution evidence."

The D.A. squinted warily.

"Is the defendant pleading guilty?"

"I am merely stipulating to the evidence. Surely the prosecution knows the difference between a stipulation and a plea! I am only trying to save the time of the Court by stipulating to the material facts in the complaint against me!"

The D.A. was obviously disappointed in not being able to present his case. Walhfred Anderson repressed an urge to chuckle. He wondered how a Cyber judge would handle a stipulation.

"Do you have a defense to present?" he asked the Professor.

"Indeed I do, your Honor! I propose to bring a Cyber into the courtroom and prove that I can perform its functions more efficiently!"

The D.A. flushed.

"What kind of a farce is this? We've watched the defendant's performance for several days, and it's perfectly clear that he is merely competing against his own special Cyber unit, one with very limited memory storage capacity . . ."

"I propose further," continued Professor Neustadt, ignoring the D.A., "that the prosecution bring any Cyber unit of its choice into Court. I am quite willing to compete against any Cyber yet devised!"

This man was not only a crackpot, he was a lunatic, thought Walhfred Anderson with an inward groan. No one but a lunatic would claim he could compete with the memory storage capacity of a Cyber.

As always when troubled, he looked toward Oliver Wendell Holmes for help, but the Justice was still inscrutable. He certainly was being difficult this morning!

The Judge sighed, and began a ruling:

"The procedure suggested by the defendant would fail to answer to the material counts of the complaint . . ."

But, as he had expected, the D.A. did not intend to let this opportunity pass.

"May it please the Court," said the District Attorney, with a wide grin for the fax reporter, "the people will stipulate to the defense, and will not press for trial of the complaint if the defendant can indeed compete with a Cyber unit of our choice."

Walhfred Anderson glowered at the unsympathetic Justice Holmes. Dammit, man, he thought, don't be so calm about this whole thing. What if you were sitting here, and I was up there in a gold frame? Aloud, he hedged:

"The Court does not believe such a test could be properly and fairly conducted."

"I am not concerned with being fairly treated," orated the wispy Professor. "I propose that five questions or problems be posed to the Cyber and myself, and that we be judged on both the speed and accuracy of our replies. I am quite willing for the prosecution to select the questions."

Go to hell, Holmes, thought Judge Anderson. I don't need you anyway. I've got the answer. The Professor is stark, raving mad.

Before he could develop a ruling along this line, the grinning D.A. had accepted the Professor's terms.

"I have but one condition," interposed the defendant, "if I win this test, I would like to submit a question of my own to the Cyber."

The D.A. hesitated, conferred in a whisper with his assistant, then shrugged.

"We so stipulate."

Firmly, Walhfred Anderson turned his back on Oliver Wendell Holmes.

"In the opinion of the Court," he thundered, "the proposed demonstration would be irrelevant, immaterial and without substantive basis in law. Unless the People proceed with their case in the proper manner, the Court will dismiss this complaint!"

"Objection!"

"Objection!"

The word was spoken simultaneously by both the D.A. and the Professor. Then the defendant bowed toward the District Attorney, and asked him to continue.

For one of the few times in his life, Walhfred Anderson found himself faced with the same objection, at the same time, from both prosecution and defense. What a morning! He felt like turning the Court over to a Cyber judge right here and now, and stomping back to his chambers. Let Holmes try getting along with a Cyber!

The D.A.'s voice slashed into his thoughts.

"The People object on the grounds that there is ample precedent in law for the type of court demonstration to which we have agreed . . ."

"For example," spoke up the Professor, "People vs. Borth, 201 N.Y., Supp. 47—"

The District Attorney blinked, and looked wary again.

"The People are not familiar with the citation," he said, "but there is no reason to be in doubt. The revised Judicial Code of Procedure provides for automatic and immediate review of disputed points of law by the Cyber Appellate Division."

CAD! Walhfred Anderson customarily used every legal stratagem to avoid the indignity of appearing before CAD. But now he was neatly trapped.

Grumbling, he visaphoned the Presiding Judge, and was immediately assigned to Cyber V, CAD, fourth floor.

Cyber V presided over a sunlit, pleasantly carpeted courtroom in the south wing of the Justice Building. Square, bulky, with mat black finish, the Cyber reposed in the center of a raised mahogany stand. Its screen and vocader grill looked austerely down on the long tables provided for opposing counsel.

As Walhfred Anderson belligerently led the Professor and the D.A. into the courtroom, Cyber V hummed softly. A dozen colored lights on its front grid began to blink.

Judge Anderson angrily repressed an instinct to bow, as he had done in his younger years when appearing to plead a case before a human Appellate Court.

The Cyber's soft, pleasantly modulated voice said:

"Please proceed."

Curbing his roiled feelings of rage and indignity, the Judge stepped to the stand in front of the vocader grill and tersely presented the facts of the case, the reasons for his ruling. Cyber V blinked and hummed steadily, assimilating and filing the facts.

The D.A. followed the Judge to the stand, and, from long habit, addressed Cyber V with the same emotion and voice tricks he would have used in speaking to a human judge. Walhfred Anderson grimaced with disgust.

When the D.A. finished, Cyber V hummed briefly, two amber lights flickered, and the soft voice said:

"Defense counsel will please take the stand."

Professor Neustadt smiled his ironic, exasperating smile.

"The defense stipulates to the facts as stated."

The frontal grid lights on Cyber V flashed furiously; the hum rose to a whine, like a motor accelerating for a steep climb.

Suddenly, all was quiet, and Cyber V spoke in the same soft, pleasant voice:

"There are three cases in modern jurisprudence that have direct bearing on the matter of People vs. Neustadt.

"Best known is the case of People vs. Borth, 201 N.Y., Supp. 47 . . ."

Walhfred Anderson saw the D.A. stiffen to attention as the Cyber re-

peated the citation given by Professor Neustadt. He felt his own pulse surge with the stir of a faint, indefinable hope.

"There are also the cases of Forsythe vs. State, 6 Ohio, 19, and Murphy vs. U.S., 2d, 85 C.C.A.

"These cases establish precedence for a courtroom demonstration to determine points of material fact.

"Thank you, Gentlemen."

The voice stopped. All lights went dark. Cyber V, CAD, had rendered its decision.

Whatever misgivings the D.A. may have generated over the Professor's display of legal knowledge were overshadowed now by his satisfaction at this display of Cyber efficiency.

"Eight minutes!" he announced triumphantly. "Eight minutes to present the facts of the case and obtain a ruling. There's efficiency for you! There's modern courtroom procedure!"

Walhfred Anderson felt the weight of eighty-six years as he cocked the angle of his bow tie, squared his shoulders and led the way back to his own courtroom. Maybe the new way was right. Maybe he was just an old man, burdened with dreams, memories, the impedimentia of human emotions. It would have taken him many long, weary hours to dig out those cases. Maybe the old way had died with Holmes and the other giants of that era.

Details of the demonstration were quickly concluded. The D.A. selected a Cyber IX for the test. Evidently he had acquired a new respect for Professor Neustadt and was taking no chances. Cyber IX was a massive new model, used as an integrator by the sciences. Judge Anderson had heard that its memory storage units were the greatest yet devised.

If Professor Neustadt had also heard this, he gave no sign of it. He made only a slight, contemptuous nod of assent to the D.A.'s choice.

For an instant, the Judge found himself hoping that the Professor would be beaten into humility by Cyber IX. The man's attitude was maddening.

Walhfred Anderson banged his gavel harder than necessary, and recessed the hearing for three days. In the meantime, a Cyber IX was to be moved into the courtroom and placed under guard. Professor Neustadt was freed on bail, which he had already posted.

Court fax-sheet reporters picked up the story and ballooned it. The D.A.'s office released publicity stories almost hourly. Cartoonists created "Battle of the Century" illustrations, with Cyber IX and Professor Neustadt posed like fighters in opposite corners of the ring. "Man challenges machine" was the caption, indicating that the Professor was a definite underdog and thus the sentimental favorite. One court reporter confided to Judge Anderson that bookmakers were offering odds of ten to one on Cyber IX.

To the Judge's continuing disgust, Professor Neustadt seemed as avid

as the Prosecutor's office for publicity. He allowed himself to be guest-interviewed on every available television show; one program dug up an ancient film of the Professor as a quiz kid, extracting cube roots in a piping, confident voice.

Public interest boiled. TV coverage of the court test was demanded, and eagerly agreed to by both the Prosecutor and Professor Neustadt. Walhfred Anderson ached to cry out against bringing a carnival atmosphere into his courtroom; the fax photographers were bad enough. But he knew that any attempt to interfere would bring him back before that infernal CAD.

When he entered his courtroom on the morning of the trial, the Judge wore a new bow tie, a flippant green, but he felt like many a defendant he had watched step up before his bench to receive sentence. After this morning, there'd be no stopping the D.A.'s campaign for Cyber judges. He glared unhappily at the battery of television cameras. He noted that one of them was pointed at Oliver Wendell Holmes. The Justice didn't seem to mind; but who would—all safe and snug in a nice gold frame? Easy enough for Holmes to look so cocky.

The bright lights hurt his eyes, and he had to steel himself in order to present the picture of dignified equanimity that was expected of a judge. People would be looking at him from every part of the world. Five hundred million viewers, one of the columnists had estimated.

Professor Neustadt appeared in the same shiny brown suit. As he passed the huge Cyber IX unit, metallic gray and mounted on a table of reinforced steel, the Professor paused and bowed, in the manner of a courtly gladiator saluting a respected foe. Spectators clapped and whistled their approval. Television cameras zoomed in on the scene. With easy showmanship, Professor Neustadt maintained the pose for closeups, his owlish eyes wide and unblinking.

Judge Anderson banged his gavel for order. What a poseur! What a fraud! This charlatan would get a million dollars' worth of publicity out of the case.

At a nod from the D.A., the bailiff gave Professor Neustadt a pad of paper on which to note his answers. It had been previously agreed that Cyber IX would answer visually, on the screen, instead of by vocader. The Professor was seated at the far end of the counsel table, where he could not see the screen. Clerks with stopwatches were stationed behind the Professor and Cyber IX.

"Is the defendant ready?" inquired Judge Anderson, feeling like an idiot.

"Of course."

The Judge turned to Cyber IX, then caught himself. He flushed. The courtroom tittered.

The District Attorney had five questions, each in a sealed envelope,

which also contained an answer certified by an eminent authority in the field.

With a flourish, keeping his profile to the cameras, the D.A. handed the first envelope to Judge Anderson.

"We'll begin with a simple problem in mathematics," he announced to the TV audience.

From the smirk in his voice, Judge Anderson was prepared for the worst. But he read the question with a perverse sense of satisfaction. This Professor was in for a very rough morning. He cleared his throat, read aloud:

"In analyzing the economics of atomic power plant operation, calculate the gross heat input for a power generating plant of 400 x 10^6 watts electrical output."

Cyber IX hummed into instantaneous activity; its lights flashed in sweeping curves and spirals across the frontal grid.

Professor Neustadt sat perfectly still, eyes closed. Then he scribbled something on a pad of paper.

Two stopwatches clicked about a second apart. The clerk handed the Professor's slip of paper to Judge Anderson. The Judge checked it, turned to the screen. Both answers were identical:

3,920 x 10^6 Btu/hr.

Time was announced as fourteen seconds for Cyber IX; fifteen and three-tenths seconds for Professor Neustadt. The Cyber had won the first test, but by an astoundingly close margin. The courtroom burst into spontaneous applause for the Professor. Walhfred Anderson was incredulous. What a fantastic performance!

No longer smirking, the D.A. handed the Judge a second envelope.

"What is the percentage compressibility of caesium under 45,000 atmospheres of pressure, and how do you account for it?"

Once again Cyber IX hummed and flickered into action.

And once again Professor Neustadt sat utterly still, head tilted back like an inquisitive parakeet. Then he wrote swiftly. A stopwatch clicked.

Walhfred Anderson took the answer with trembling fingers. He saw the D.A. rub dry lips together, try to moisten them with a dry tongue. A second stopwatch clicked.

The Judge compared the correct answer with the Professor's answer and the answer on the screen. All were worded differently, but in essence were the same. Hiding his emotion in a tone gruffer than usual, Judge Anderson read the Professor's answer:

"The change in volume is 17 percent. It is due to an electronic transition for a 6s zone to a 5d zone."

The Professor's elapsed time was 22 seconds. Cyber IX had taken 31 seconds to answer the compound question.

Professor Neustadt pursed his lips; he seemed displeased with his tremendous performance.

Moving with the agility of a pallbearer, the D.A. gave Judge Anderson the third question:

"In twenty-five words or less, state the Nernst Law of thermodynamics."

This was clearly a trick question, designed to trap a human mind in its own verbiage.

Cyber IX won, in eighteen seconds. But in just two-fifths of a second more, Professor Neustadt came through with a brilliant twenty-four word condensation:

"The entropy of a substance becomes zero at the absolute zero of temperature, provided it is brought to this temperature by a reversible process."

A tabulation of total elapsed time revealed that Professor Neustadt was leading by nine and three-tenths seconds.

A wild excitement blended with the Judge's incredulity. The D.A. seemed to have developed a tic in his right cheek.

On the fourth question, dealing with the structural formula similarities of dimenhydrinate and diphenhydramine hydrochloride, Professor Neustadt lost three seconds.

On the fifth question, concerning the theoretical effects of humidity inversion on microwave transmission, the Professor gained back a full second.

The courtroom was bedlam, and Walhfred Anderson was too excited to pound his gavel. In the glass-walled, soundproofed television booths, announcers grew apoplectic as they tried to relay the fever-pitch excitement of the courtroom to the outside world.

Professor Neustadt held up his bone-thin hand for silence.

"May it please the Court . . . The District Attorney agreed that in the event of victory I could ask Cyber IX an optional question. I would like to do so at this time."

Judge Anderson could only nod, and hope that his bulldog features were concealing his emotions. The D.A. kept his back rigidly to the television cameras.

Professor Neustadt strutted up to Cyber IX, flipped on the vocader switch and turned to the cameras.

"Since Cyber IX is essentially a scientific integrator and mathematical unit," he began pedantically, "I'll put my question in the Cyber's own framework. Had another Cyber been selected for this test, I would phrase my question differently."

He turned challengingly back to Cyber IX, paused for dramatic effect, and asked:

"What are the magnitudes of a dream?"

Cyber IX hummed and twinkled. The hum rose higher and higher. The lights flickered in weird, disjointed patterns, blurring before the eye.

Abruptly, the hum stopped. The lights dimmed, faded one by one.

The eternally calm, eternally pleasant voice of Cyber IX spoke from the vocader grill:

"Problem unsolved."

For an interminable instant there was silence in the courtroom. Complete silence. Stunned incredulity. It was followed by a collective gasp, which Walhfred Anderson could hear echoing around the world. Cyber IX had been more than beaten; it had failed to solve a problem.

The gasp gave way to unrestrained cheering.

But the Professor brought quiet again by raising his bony hand. Now there was a strange, incongruous air of dignity about his thin figure.

"Please," he said, "please understand one thing . . . The purpose of this demonstration and my question was not to discredit Cyber IX, which is truly a great machine, a wonder of science.

"Cyber IX could not know the magnitudes of a dream . . . because it cannot dream.

"As a matter of fact, I do not know the magnitudes of a dream, but that is not important . . . because I *can* dream!

"The dream is the difference . . . The dream born in man, as the poet said, 'with a sudden, clamorous pain' . . ."

There was no movement or sound in the courtroom. Walhfred Anderson held the Professor's last written answer between his fingers, as if fearing that even the small movement to release it might shatter something delicate and precious. "The dream is the difference!" There it was. So clear and true and beautiful. He looked at Holmes, and Holmes seemed to be smiling under his gray mustaches. Yes, Holmes had known the dream.

In the sound-proof booths, the announcers had stopped speaking; all mike lines were open to carry Professor Neustadt's words to five hundred million people.

"Perhaps there are no magnitudes of such a dream . . . no coordinates! Or it may be that we are not yet wise enough to know them. The future may tell us, for the dream is the rainbow bridge from the present and the past to the future."

Professor Neustadt's eyes were half-closed again, and his head was cocked back, bird-like.

"Copernicus dreamed a dream . . . So did da Vinci, Galileo and Newton, Darwin and Einstein . . . all so long ago . . .

"Cyber IX has not dreamed a dream . . . Nor have Cyber VIII, VII, VI, V, IV, III, II, I.

"But they can free men to dream.

"Remember that, if you forget all else: They can free men to dream!

"Man's knowledge has grown so vast that much of it would be lost or useless without the storage and recall capacity of the Cybers—and man himself would be so immersed in what he knows that he would never have time to dream of that which he does not yet know, but must and can know.

"Why should not the scientist use the past without being burdened by it? Why should not the lawyer and the judge use the hard-won laws of justice without being the slave of dusty law books?"

Walhfred Anderson accepted the rebuke without wincing. The rebuke for all the hours he had wasted because he had been too stubborn to use a Cyber clerk, or consult Cyber V. The old should not resist the new, nor the new destroy the old. There was the letter of the law, and there was the spirit, and the spirit was the dream. What was old Hammurabi's dream? Holmes had quoted it once. " . . . to establish justice on the earth . . . to hold back the strong from oppressing the feeble . . . to shine like the sun-god upon the blackheaded men, and to illumine the land . . ." Holmes had dreamed the dream, all right. He had dreamed it grandly. But maybe there was room for small dreams, too, and still time for dreams when the years were so few and lonely.

The Professor suddenly opened his eyes, and his voice took on the twang of steel under tension.

"You are already wondering," he told the cameras accusingly, "whether I have not disproved my own words by defeating Cyber IX.

"That is not true.

"I defeated Cyber IX because I have wasted a man's life—my own! You all know that as a child I was a mnemonic freak, a prodigy, if you prefer. My mind was a filing cabinet, a fire-proof cabinet neatly filled with facts that could never kindle into dreams. All my life I have stuffed my filing cabinet. For sixty years I have filed and filed.

"And then I dreamed one dream—my first, last and only dream.

"I dreamed that man would misuse another gift of science, as he had misused so many . . . I dreamed of the Cybers replacing and enslaving man, instead of freeing man to dream . . . And I dreamed that the golden hour would come when a man would have to prove that he could replace a Cyber—and thereby prove that neither man nor Cybers should ever replace each other."

Professor Neustadt turned to Judge Anderson, and his voice dropped almost to a whisper.

"Your Honor, I move that this case be dismissed."

The worn handle of his old teakwood gavel felt warm and alive to the Judge's fingers. He sat up straight, and banged resoundingly on the top of his desk.

"Case dismissed."

Then, in full view of the cameras, Walhfred Anderson turned and winked boldly at Oliver Wendell Holmes.

THE SHORES OF NIGHT

by Thomas N. Scortia

"Beyond the shores of night
The molten stars flame bright
In endless conflagration . . ."
. . . Artur R. Kurz

PROLOGUE

Omniscient!

Like Argus, he thought, *like the giant with a thousand eyes.*

Looking out upon a thousand sights, upon a thousand worlds of cold and light and gleaming rock and . . .

And Centaurus.

Centaurus that was a ball of flame wrapped in the tissue of his brain.

He had never felt so intoxicated, so suddenly filled with such an exultation that it seemed his essential self must surely overflow the finite boundaries of flesh and metal in which his ego lived.

All this is ours now, she said.

Like the kingdoms of the earth, he said.

No, that's wrong, she said. *Remember?*

You, above all, should know that, she said.

For an instant there were only the two of them, two great spheres of gleaming metal, circling the blazing star.

Silent while a thousand silences joined them.

This is the end of reality, he thought. To live forever, not as a name, not even as a man but . . .

Well, that was what he had wanted, wasn't it?

And the endless longing, the passion, the desire that had driven him through life to this end?

To the stars.

That's what he had wanted, he and the rest of them.

But why?

Secretly he had known he must answer that question. Before it hadn't been really important but now . . .

Why?

He must have voiced the thought for her voice echoed:

Why?

I don't know, he said. *How do you put something like that into words? The question is unanswerable. Why go to the stars?*

And he heard the murmur of all the far voices that thought with them and spoke with them and felt with them, a distance-spanning empathy that said,

Don't you know?

He could follow the gestation of the idea, the evolution of the desire, but there was no logic to it. It was a kind of madness, completely apart from every fundamental drive of the race. An endless paranoia, like the affliction of moths for flames or the desire of lemmings for the ocean.

No, he said, *there has to be another answer.*

There is, she said.

What?

You can find it, she said.

If you'll just look for it, she said.

BELLEROPHON

"That finishes us," General Freck said hoarsely.

The words cut the throbbing silence of the Commo Room like a knife. The Commo Sergeant and his radar man stood poised like marionettes with taut strings. At the far end of the banked computors, the programming technician froze, his fingers brushing the intricate keyboard of his instrument.

The quiet was an aching thing.

"Finishes us completely," Freck said again. The words felt like a hot poker in his throat.

He stared at the still-glowing oscilloscope of the transceiver while the radio operator before him made silent embarrassed movements with the key under his fingers.

Behind him, Beth Bechtoldt sighed.

Young Art Sommers said, "They can't end it all . . . not like this."

His red uniformed shoulders hunched impatiently, the tiny silver bars in his shoulder loops catching points of light from the glow tubes overhead.

"Not with a bang?" Freck said. He was conscious of the way the lean flesh hugged his cheeks, conscious of the heavy flush of anger under his swarthy skin.

"No," Beth said, "not with a bang. In real life things seldom end with a bang."

He stared at the woman, seeing the tired lines in the corners of her eyes, the sudden bitterness that twisted her mouth.

"This isn't the end," he said. "We'll try again. We have to . . . someday."

"Someday?"

Freck looked at his hands, the broad flat hands with the thin knobby fingers. He saw that the bristles on the backs of his fingers were all a muddy grey and sudden panic seized him.

"But we're too old, you and me," Beth said. "Perhaps Art will see it, but this is our last chance."

Maybe, he thought, *but we know that's a lie. This is the start of retrenchment, of the withdrawal from space. Cut expenses here, destroy the station, the project, but it won't end here. The tide is at its crest and now . . .*

He shivered, feeling a new kind of chill. He looked at the silver star and comet insignia on his sleeve and the metal seemed all at once blackened and lusterless.

Behind him he felt the twenty inch circle of frosted insulglas radiate cold into the room. It was a drab room, as all of the rooms of his life had been drab, drab in a way that only lonely military bases can be drab. From the fused rock walls to the hard plastic floors, the cluttered Commo Room and the levels beneath that bit into the native rock of the mountain reflected the starkness of his life, all the long empty years that had led up to this moment.

His moment of triumph.

His moment of defeat.

"Just a few more weeks," he said. "Just a lousy month more."

He walked to the insulglas port and with one hand scrubbed at the frost that covered all but a coin-sized area.

Outside, it was still snowing.

It had been snowing for years now, ever since the end of Pluto's long icy summer. It was a chilling, unearthly kind of snow—crystals of frozen nitrogen falling like plummets from a dead sky. When they had built the base ten years before, there had been winds, monster gales that heaped the frozen gases about the fused walls of the base. As autumn had lengthened into the centuries-long winter and the atmosphere had crystallized on the ground, the winds had dwindled to mere breezes that ruffled the ubiquitous white into patterns reminiscent of corduroyed sands on the beaches of an Earth millions of miles sunward.

It was like a block print, Freck thought, struck in the severest style imaginable. There was the white of the unnatural snow covering the ground and mounded against the jagged mountains that ringed the far end of the valley. Then, without any intermediate tone, there was the dead blackness of the sky and in the blackness, the countless hard points of light that were the stars with Sol lost somewhere among them.

And joining white with black, wedding them into a whole that only then gained meaning, was the bright shaft of the *Pegasus*.

The ship grew from the white plain and cleaved the blackness above like a gleaming dagger. There were five bright beams of light, painting her length so that her metal sides threw back a diamond brilliance that was dazzling.

She had rested there for a year now while small men in metal suits tended her and readied her for the supreme moment. They still worked making last minute modifications to her servo-mechanisms, testing her commo circuits, calibrating her pile monitors, performing a thousand complex rituals in her titanium belly before the intricate mass that was the Bechtoldt Drive.

And the world, his world, Beth Bechtoldt's world had come to an end . . . not with a bang but with the casual flick of a wave pattern on the oscilloscope of the c-cube radio receiver, a brief coded message that said:

"Stop! That's all. Put up your toys and come home . . . forever."

"Tell them to stop it," he said. "Tell them it's over and we're going home."

Sommers walked through the hatch leading to the metal stairs that spiraled down into the base. They waited for silent moments, watching the men at work on the *Pegasus*.

After a while the men stopped. They stood, listening to the voice in their earphones. Then slowly they began to gather their tools and file back toward the airlock below.

Hell, I'm getting old, Freck thought. *This isn't the end of the world.* Then he thought: *But it is . . . My God, it is.*

"Look," he told Beth, "no damned economy-minded appropriation committee can stop us that easily."

"They have," she said.

He looked at the woman, thinking, *Why, she was pretty once. Now she's just a small grey woman, empty and alone.*

"It's just that there's an election coming up back home. The Economic Immediacy Party is just using the project as a lever to force a vote of confidence."

She shook her head.

"It's more than that," she said. "For the last half century we've explored our system from Mercury out and what have we got to show for it?"

"I never expected that from you," he said angrily.

"Oh, I know what you mean," she said. "There's the Martian colony but it's not self-supporting. A collection of pressurized buildings that takes endless money in upkeep. And Triplanet and the other spacetrade companies . . . how far do you think they'd get without heavy government subsidy? Sure, they bring in the fissionables we need, but the breeder piles on Earth would take care of the world's needs if it weren't for space travel. We aren't paying our way and the people of Earth are tired of footing the bill."

"You talk like one of those blind budget-shaving senators," he said hotly.

"No," she said. "We always knew that the consolidation of the system was just a preliminary to the big push to the stars, that we couldn't hope to pay our way for a century. But don't damn the senators. It's the little man in the street who can't see where all this is heading. He can't realize the tremendous wealth that space travel will eventually put in his pocket. He needs something big, something dramatic to fire his imagination."

"Like the *Pegasus*?"

"Like the *Pegasus*."

"Well, they haven't done her in yet," he said fiercely.

"It's not good," she said. "Once we leave, we'll never be back. You know that."

He stood, his thin lips compressed in thought.

"I'll see you in the mess in a few minutes," he told her.

She nodded silently and turned to go. At the hatch she stopped for a moment and looked at him silently.

As soon as she was out of sight, he turned to the radio operator and said, "Raise Earth. I want a direct key to Marshal Jenks. And don't let them put you off."

The heavy pulse of anger still beat in his throat as he descended the spiral stairs from the Commo Room. His lungs ached with the redness of the rage that held him.

God, the number of men who had sacrificed their years and their lives . . . and now for nothing.

Because, suddenly, after the billions of the past half century, it was costing too much money and too many lives . . .

The lives of unnamed scores and . . .

Ron Pyle with the radiation-withered arm. (How could he forget that?) And Mario Vincenti who . . .

Don't think of him. It wasn't your fault.

In the tiny officer's mess, he found Beth and Art Sommers and the base physician, Doc Dean, drinking coffee. He sat down beside the white-jacketed medic and waited while the mess steward brought him a plastic mug of the steaming brew. The others didn't look up. They sat, staring into their coffee.

He thought, *Why so glum, Doc? You're just a civilian hired hand.* Then: *Well, you have an investment here too. After all, you named the* Pegasus.

Classics-loving Doc, the man who could give up a quarter of his meager weight allowance to a projector and a microreel library of *The Aeneid* and *The Song of Roland* and *The Divine Comedy*.

He wondered, a man who could be thrilled by the Odyssey or a trip to hell . . . what would he think of going to the stars?

And young Sommers? He'd certainly never felt the driving need to see the project a success, not the way the two before him, Pyle and Vincenti, had felt that need.

He looked at the young man, remembering the way Pyle had looked after the hang-fire had shriveled his arm. Well, maybe it was better. It might have happened again. They still weren't sure of how a gravitational field and the drive vortex interacted and . . .

"Have you ever heard what happened to Ron Pyle?" he asked.

Dean looked up from his coffee.

"No," he said. "I suppose they gave him a prosthetic unless he found a donor."

"Donor?" Sommers said.

"That's right. Someone to give him an arm to replace the one he lost. You know, almost any organ can be grafted to a new body . . . arms, legs, eyes, new balance organs . . . if you secure them from a living donor before the nerve endings degenerate. It's a simple operation and with the chemical growth factors we use in surgery, the graft will take in less than twelve hours. Failing that, well, there's the prosthetics that work by direct nerve impulse."

"The machine joining the flesh?" Beth said.

"You might say that. Actually, it's quite possible to transfer a complete nervous system to a mechanical environment. They've already used organic nervous systems in cybernetic machines to act as memory units. There's the Director, for instance, the big cybernetics machine in the capitol at New Rhodes."

Beth shivered.

"That sounds horrible."

"Maybe. Anyway, I'm a country doctor at heart. I've never tried other than organic transplants and I never want to."

Well, Freck thought, perhaps the loss of an arm wasn't so bad. But there was Mario and there was no saving the spark of life that had blazed out.

He gulped a mouthful of scalding coffee.

But Vincenti wouldn't have cared, not if they went on. But to know that he had died to no purpose, that humankind was withdrawing back into its little foetal world . . .

He looked up in sudden decision.

"I want to talk to Beth alone," he said.

"Sure," Sommers said.

Dean finished his coffee, eyed them searchingly and followed the young man from the mess.

As soon as they had left, Freck said, "We're going through with it."

"What do you mean?" Beth said.

"We're going ahead with the Drive test."

"But you can't do that. You'll be court-martialed."

"Uh, uh," he shook his head. "I had a hell of a time talking 'Skinny' Jenks into it . . . You know, Space Marshal Jenks . . . He and I were classmates at the Academy."

"He can't give you that kind of permission," she protested.

"Shut up and listen," he said. "He didn't give any permission. He just said he'd look the other way, that he'd try to give us a couple of extra weeks, see that the relief ship is delayed administratively."

"But two weeks isn't enough," she said. "We need more time to run preliminary tests on the new hook-up, to make sure that . . ."

"Time is the one thing we do not have," he said. "The relief ship is on its way. It'll be delayed at Uranus Station for one week. That's the best he could promise."

She sat silently for a moment, her fingers plucking at the lapel of the work jumper that she wore.

"No," she said. "We owe Art every chance we can give him."

"Art takes his chances like any soldier."

"He's got to know at least."

"No!"

He spit the word with such violence that she drew back, her eyes wide with surprise.

"All right," he said. "It's got to be that way, Beth. We can't take the chance he'll back out."

She started to get up, but his arm restrained her.

"Beth," he said, "we've worked too hard, you and me, poured too much of our lives into this thing to let hair-splitting interfere now. This is the sort of risk Art volunteered for. It's his job."

"What kind of a person are you?" she said. "I thought I knew up to this moment."

"Look," he said, "is it important, what we're doing here?"

"Yes, but . . ."

"And it'll be more important to the generations after."

She sank slowly to the mess bench. Her face was cold, emotionless. After a moment she nodded silently.

"'D' Day is ten days from now," he said.

"All right," she said wearily. "I'll try to be ready."

"Don't worry," he said. "It'll come off all right."

"Yes," she said. "It'll come off."

But her eyes were frightened.

He sat woodenly, chewing his lip, wondering how he could tell her . . . tell her that there was no one he would not sacrifice for this . . . himself, her . . . No, even under the cold mask of the physicist, she was still a woman, weak with a woman's weakness and he could never . . .

"Fifteen days," he said. "Fifteen days at the most."

She said nothing.

A man can die a hundred times in fifteen days, he thought.

It was impossible to sleep. He spent long hours, tossing through the artificial period designated as "night," feeling the tautness build up within himself.

When morning came, he dressed slowly in the tiny cubicle of his room, breathing the faintly stale air that filled the place, and he wondered at the heavy feeling in the pit of his stomach.

It was silly, he told himself. Someone had to take the chance . . .

But Sommers?

Who else was there? he asked himself.

He ate breakfast silently with Dean and the boy. Beth was nowhere in evidence. All through the meal he found himself avoiding Sommers' eyes. Once he tried to engage in a discussion of *Crito* with Dean, but his mind kept returning to the ship on the frozen plain outside.

Strong, he thought. *Someone has to find the strength to go on.*

But he knew that he was afraid. For the first time in his life he was afraid.

While he was having his second cup of coffee, Sommers rose, excused himself, and left.

Doc Dean looked at Freck speculatively.

"I suppose," the medic said at last, "you know I don't go along with this?"

Freck said nothing.

"Oh, I know," Dean said. "It's none of my business."

"I didn't say that," Freck said.

"Look, what chance is there of this thing succeeding?"

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I said. I've watched Beth since yesterday. It's written all over her face. Yours too, for that matter. You're not sure."

"No," Freck said. "It'll work. It has to."

"That isn't what I asked you. I asked if it would work."

Freck stared at him silently.

"You've had trouble before," the man continued. "Even with all the time in the world to prepare. I know about the problem Beth has had with the effect of a gravitational field on the drive vortex. What makes you think you've solved that problem?"

Freck sipped his coffee, feeling angry at the medic for putting the doubt into words.

"All right," he said finally, "we're not sure. Given more time, Beth could iron out the wrinkles, but we don't have the time."

"Does Sommers know that?"

"I think so."

"You're a poor liar," Dean said. The contempt showed quite plainly in his eyes.

"All right, I'm lying. Do you think I like it? But we've got to run the test before the relief ship arrives. If we don't, it means the end of everything we've worked for and sacrificed for in the last twenty years. This isn't just a pretty technical problem for us any more. Beth and I have poured our whole lives into this."

"For the greater glory of humanity?" Dean mocked. "Or for the greater glory of Major General Matthew Freck?"

"You've got no right to say that."

"As much right as you have to send that boy out without telling him what he's up against. It's his life you're risking, not your own precious neck."

Freck pulled himself to his feet and towered over the medic.

"I could kill you for that," he said.

"Don't fool yourself," the medic said contemptuously. "Take a look in the mirror. Then tell me whom you want to kill."

As he walked from the mess, there was a part of him that marveled at his rage. It had been years since such a passion had seized him. He felt like lashing out at the insensate walls. He wanted something to strike at and, as the first fury subsided, the sickness of too much adrenalin clutched at his stomach.

He walked to his room and dimmed the lights. Then he sat in the single chair, staring at the shadowed walls opposite.

He knew that Dean was right. He couldn't go through with it. Sommers had to be told that there was a distinct possibility that the ship would go, that the test was being rushed past the margin of safety.

And that would be the end of it.

The boy didn't care if man got to the stars. This was the glory ride for him, the chance to get his name in all the history books.

But dead heroes don't enjoy seeing their name in print.

He would never have given what Freck had given to this idea. The

long past stretched out before him, the way he had robbed himself of everything that had made life worthwhile, everything for this final chance. There was the thought of Catherine, now dead, who had loved him and whom he had loved . . . but not enough.

And the thought of what their lives might have been together, the strong sons they might have had.

Like Pyle and Vincenti . . . and Art.

That was the hardest part of all the years. That one agonizing period of his life. The long hours with the single obscessing idea while she stood silently by and tried to understand. The uneasiness, the accusation in her eyes, the announcement of the coming child. Well, that had almost made a difference, but he couldn't stop then.

And at last the final, very quiet statement that she was leaving. All the timeless memories flooded back in the instant.

And the thought of the boy David whom he had never seen.

The aching thought of *Somewhere, my son . . .*

David and his children who would someday go to the stars.

No, he couldn't see that destroyed. The one inheritance he could give to his son and the ones who came after.

Not after what he had given up.

And it had been worth it.

Hadn't it?

He spent the afternoon conferring with Beth Bechtoldt and the chiefs of the installation sections. There was actually little left for him to do now that the decision to go ahead had been made.

The basic unit of the drive had been installed almost a month before and each section separately tested. The final assembly of the diverse units would take place in space away from the strong surface gravity of Pluto.

Four units had exploded before they had discovered the unstabilizing effect of the sun's gravitational field on the negative entropy vortex that the Bechtoldt field generated.

That was why they had moved the tests to Pluto, even at the enormous expense of establishing this lonely base. But even that move had not completely solved the problem. It had taken a disastrous explosion to show that even the field near the surface of a planet was strong enough to introduce that dangerous instability.

A disastrous explosion and the life of Mario Vincenti.

As the meeting of the section heads broke up, he motioned for Beth to stay. Her eyes were dull and masked as she looked at him.

"What do you want?" she said.

There was suddenly the horrible pressing need to justify himself in her eyes.

"We've been very close for a long time," he said.

"Yes," she said. "We've worked together for a long time."

"I had hoped that we understood each other."

She said nothing.

"Beth, it's got to be this way."

"Has it?" she said.

A trace of moistness gleamed in her eyes and she turned toward the door. He made no move to stop her. It seemed as if the things most precious in his life were suddenly evanescent and unsubstantial. Even the long comfortable association with Beth was bitterness and distrust.

Dean was right, he thought. The man he hated was himself and he knew that he couldn't continue to live with that consuming hatred if the boy died.

But to give up all those years, to betray all the men who had given their lives to this challenge . . .

No, there was only one course.

Consistent to the end, he thought bitterly.

After dinner, he returned to his office in the operations section and stared moodily at the fused rock walls. When the intercom on his desk buzzed, he ignored it for long moments.

Somehow, he knew what it would be even before he finally answered its summons.

He told the sergeant to send him in.

When Sommers had saluted, he motioned him to a chair and waited for him to speak.

"Look," the boy said finally, "I hope you'll understand what I'm trying to say. All this doesn't mean quite the same thing to me that it does to you. I'm a career officer. I volunteered for this assignment strictly to further that career."

He paused. Then the words poured out in a flood.

"Oh, I know, 'courageous young men, braving unknown dangers for the stars.' I read the Sunday supplements. But I honestly don't feel it. Maybe there's a lack in me. Maybe I'm a cold fish. But the most immediate concern with me is getting ahead . . . and staying alive."

So that was it, Freck thought. He had known that she couldn't go through with it . . . that eventually she would tell him.

A man might have found the necessary courage for the big lie, but not a woman, not Beth.

"You understand," he said slowly. "The test is dangerous, nothing more. There are uncertainties. We should have more time."

"Dr. Bechtoldt is afraid," Sommers said.

"The chances are still good. She'll tell you that."

He leaned forward and keyed the intercom.

"Send Dr. Bechtoldt down here," he told the speaker.

Sommers shook his head.

"It's no use," he said. "I want better odds than you can give me."

Freck looked at him and felt his body tense.

"I could order you," he said.

"Perhaps. I'd appeal through channels though. You wouldn't like that."

"Now, look here," Freck said, leaning across the desk. "You volunteered for this duty. You're the only one we have."

"I didn't volunteer for certain death."

"You say you're a career officer. Let me tell you something. It doesn't pay to have powerful enemies in the service."

The young man's eyes widened.

"All right," Freck said, "that's laying it on the line. You can never prove what happens in this office. But I'll tell you flatly, if you back out of this, you may as well resign your commission and get out of the service."

The boy's face was suddenly red.

"I've heard about you," he said through pale lips. "I've heard about the way you've angled for what you wanted, the people you've stepped on. I knew you played dirty, but not this dirty."

"Call it what you want," Freck said. "No excuses. But you'll go through with this or I'll see that your career is finished."

He sat back, weak with the realization of what he had done. There was a deep feeling of loss. For the first time he realized how, up until this moment of the open break, he had hoped against all reason that the boy might suddenly come to share in his dream.

Foolish impractical fantasy.

And so, there it was. The open break.

"You dirty black-mailing coward," the boy spit the words. He pushed from his chair, the hate glittering in his eyes.

"You rotten coward," he said and turned to the door.

As he opened the door, Beth Bechtoldt stepped in.

"What's wrong?" she asked, seeing the boy's face.

"Ask him," Sommers said, gesturing at Freck. He pushed past her and slammed the door.

"What did you do to him?" Beth demanded.

Freck told her.

She looked at him in horror.

"That's the long and the short of it," he said fiercely, springing to his feet. "Blackmail, if you want to call it that."

"I won't be a party to this."

"You're not a party to anything. You mind your technical personnel and I'll handle the military complement of this base."

He leaned forward, his clenched fists supporting his weight on the desk.

"So, I'm not a nice person," he said. "So in minutes, I've become scum in your book."

"Spare me the one about cracking eggs to make an omelet."

"I'll spare you that and anything else you want. But the drive gets

tested. Do you think I'll let a punk kid write *finis* to the greatest thing men have ever tried? You don't know the people I've stepped on, the juggling of efficiency reports, the way I've debased myself for this one big chance."

"Don't I?" she said. "How could I help knowing about you after working with you for these years? But I fooled myself into thinking you were a man of courage, that you were deliberately crucifying yourself for some misty ideal. I didn't think you'd deliberately commit murder."

He sank back into the chair, his limbs leaden weights.

"Matt, you can't do this," she protested. "Even Marshal Jenks' shuffling of papers won't protect you on this."

"That's a laugh," he said. "I had no promises from Jenks. His orders were to suspend all operations immediately. My career is finished anyway when he hears what I've done to date."

"You'll be court-martialed."

"Do you think that matters now?"

His face felt limp and numb as though it were made of melting wax.

"Nothing is going to stop me in this," he said. "Nothing, Beth, not even you."

They watched from the Commo Room as the group of men in heavy space suits escorted Sommers across the frozen plain to the *Pegasus*. They watched him climb into the safety capsule and they saw it lifted into its slot on the gleaming side of the ship.

Then the men moved back toward the base.

"All right," Freck ordered. "Try to raise him."

The radio operator began to repeat the *Pegasus*'s call sign into the microphone.

Freck breathed deeply, trying to ignore the hidden voice that chanted in his mind: *Stop him. Stop him. While there's still time, stop him.*

No, he thought, *it's too late to turn back. It was too late years ago.*

"All secure," Sommers' voice rasped from the speaker.

Freck said, "Tell him to take off easy and orbit for position before he activates the drive."

They felt the shock as the motors started and the white light sprayed through the small port, flooding the room. A moment later as the light died, Freck watched Beth Bechtoldt sink into a chair beside the c-cube transmitter.

"Now," he said, "we can only wait."

The radar operator began to call off soundings in a low voice.

"You can still call it off," Dean said hoarsely.

Freck looked at his watch. Then he shook his head.

"I'm orbiting now," Sommers' voice said. "About twenty thousand miles out."

"Give us a count when you're ready," Freck said.

They waited silently for ten minutes and then:

"Stop him," Beth said suddenly. "Stop him."

"It's your baby," Freck said into the mike.

Sommers began to count.

". . . eight . . . seven . . . six . . ."

Out there, swimming in blackness, he thought. *Pray God, everything is all right.*

". . . four . . . three . . . two . . ."

It's got to be all right . . .

". . . one . . . zero . . ."

Silence.

Then: "It's like a shell of blue fire . . . expanding around the ship. As soon as it stabilizes, I'll apply thrust and . . ."

It's going to be all right.

". . . flickering . . . something's wrong . . . field's turning red . . . radiation's up and . . ."

"Dump the capsule," Beth sobbed.

"Art," Freck yelled, thrusting his head at the microphone, "Art, get out quick."

There was silence then.

But only for an instant.

Then someone gasped as white light splashed blindingly on the snow outside.

"I hope that satisfies you," Dean said bitterly.

They waited for long moments.

"You killed him, you know," Dean said.

Freck shook his head dazedly.

Then the speaker crackled briefly and they heard coarse breathing.

"Sommers." Freck clutched at the microphone. "Answer me, boy. Are you all right?"

"Yes, yes," his voice was half sobbing. "Only . . ."

"Only what?"

"Only . . . only . . . I can't see."

"What's wrong?"

"Don't you understand? I can't see, I can't see."

"It was the radiation, of course," Dean said. "It seared the surface of the retina. He was looking directly at the ship when it went."

They were sitting in the small base dispensary, Freck shifting uncomfortably on the hardness of a white metal chair.

"Any hope?" he asked slowly.

Dean shook his head.

"I've run biopsies every day since the test a week ago. The nerve is still deteriorating. We might give him his sight back with a donor but . . ."

He shrugged.

"By the time we get back to Earth to a tissue bank, it'll be too late."

The medic's voice was cold, impersonal.

"The relief ship made planetfall two hours ago," Freck said slowly. "Maybe . . ."

"The *Cincinnati*? I know. Forget it. With the delay of the test, we'll be a week late in leaving. Anyway, we'd never make it back in time."

Dean's eyes were cold and unforgiving.

"I didn't realize how appropriately we'd named the ship," he said at last.

"*Pegasus*? The winged horse? How so?"

"Well, there's more to the legend than most people remember."

"What was the name of the boy, the one who captured him? Bellerophon, wasn't it?"

"That's right."

"And the rest of the legend?"

"Well, much later in life, he tried to fly to heaven on Pegasus, but the gods sent a gadfly to sting the horse. Pegasus threw his rider and after that Bellerophon wandered the earth until his death lame and blind."

"Yes," Freck said bitterly, "it was a prophetic name."

He sat, watching a tiny muscle tic in Dean's jaw.

"I didn't think you were capable of that kind of hate," he said at last.

"Hate?" Dean said. "I don't hate you. I feel a little sorry for you if anything."

"I suppose I deserved that. I should keep my mouth shut."

"No, I mean it. I don't understand you at all. When a man is a dope addict, they say he has a monkey on his back. I've been wondering about the monkey on your back."

As Freck started to say something, the medic waved his hand.

"For God's sake," Dean demanded. "Is it that important?"

"You shouldn't have to ask that."

"I mean, important enough to outweigh every human moral value?"

"I'd do the same thing again, if that's what you mean."

"Well, I'm not the one you have to answer to."

"No, that's right."

"I don't mean your superiors either. I mean that boy in there."

"How's he taking it?"

"He's going through hell now, if . . . Look, I'm not trying to rub your nose in it, but I think you should see him."

"That's out."

"Afraid?"

"Perhaps, but that's out."

"You'll never live with yourself if you don't."

"You're pretty good at twisting the knife."

"Believe me, I'd do a hell of a lot more knife twisting if I could," the medic said angrily. "This is something you can't run away from."

In the end he agreed. He had hoped to avoid this final symbol of his failure.

But it was no good.

He would always know, he realized, that somewhere the boy still lived and that thought would be like an open wound. Better to face it in the immediate present.

He owed Art that much courage.

He followed Dean through the dispensary and the small emergency room behind it to the tiny four-bed hospital in the rear. They paused at the door and Dean said softly, "I'll wait here."

Freck turned pleading eyes to the man, then breathed deeply and said, "All right."

It had to be that way. He knew that.

The white hospital bed had been elevated so that Sommers reclined half erect, his empty eyes staring at the junction of the ceiling and wall across the room.

He looked very thin and very young.

"That you, Doc?" he said.

"No, Art," Freck said. "No, it's not."

"Oh," Sommers said, "I wondered when you'd come."

When, Freck thought. *He said, "When" . . . not "If."* He found a seat on the edge of the bed and stared at the boy silently.

"Oh, come on," the boy said, "it's not as bad as all that. It's not as if I had been killed."

"No," Freck said. "Thank God for that."

"I didn't have to do it, you know."

"Didn't you?" Freck said tiredly.

"I mean it. Sure, you pressured me. But later . . . after I had cooled down . . . I knew I could have backed out in spite of that. You couldn't have carried out any threats . . . not with Dean and Beth Bechtoldt knowing the whole story."

Freck looked at the boy in wonder.

"Why did you do it then?"

"Why? I suppose I wanted someone to force me into it. Actually I was afraid."

"You had good right to be."

"No, not that kind of fear. Sort of . . . well, you know . . . the thoughts of what-might-have-been later on. I knew I had to do it. I couldn't turn down the chance and live with it. But I was afraid for my own skin."

"Nobody would have blamed you."

"Nobody?" Sommers' eyebrows raised questioningly.

"Damn it," he said, "I'm not trying to go pretty and noble on you. I hated your guts after that stunt. But that kind of hate doesn't last when . . ."

His blind hand gestured at the white sheets, the aseptic walls.

"You can't let this stop you," he said finally.

"I'm afraid we're stopped already. The relief ship made planetfall this morning. We're already pulling up stakes."

"God, if I had two good eyes," the boy said.

"Well, there's a chance of a graft when we get back."

"Don't give me fairy tales. Doc Dean has already told me that the nerves will have degenerated too far for that."

"You know," Sommers said after a silent moment, "I used to think I'd gone into the service for the security . . . the career advantages. We're taught to be tough these days. Ideals are for suckers but . . ."

He smiled sorrowfully.

"That attitude leaves your life a vacuum. You begin to want something to fill it, to give it meaning. You had something, you and Beth . . . this business of giving yourself to something that's bigger . . . that can swallow you in its immensity . . ."

"No," Freck said. "No, that's no good either."

"Isn't it? Look, I'm stuck now. Blind and no possible use to anyone. I've left nothing behind, not even a gesture of greatness. The one big thing in my life I was afraid to grasp. I had to be forced into it."

"You're still young."

"What can you do without eyes?" Sommers demanded.

Freck left the hospital and walked through the dispensary to the corridors. Dean was nowhere in sight and he was quite glad that he would not have to meet the demands of conversation with the medic.

He felt a dark depression settling in his mind and he could think only of the blind boy . . . no, the man . . . who lay in the white bed behind him . . . the man who had found himself too late.

And the horror of his own wasted life pressed in upon him.

The tragedy of it all was like a leaden weight, pulling him down into an emotional darkness from which there was no rescue.

Not in this life.

The commander of the *Cincinnati* was waiting for him with Beth when he returned to the Operations Office.

He took the officer's report and motioned him to a seat as he found his own chair behind his desk.

"We're happy to have you with us, Major Terse," he said. "I suppose you have orders, relieving me of this command?"

The young man raised his eyebrows.

"Why, no sir," he said. "Should I?"

Freck glanced at Beth quickly, wondering what went on behind those sad eyes.

"Never mind," he said. "Apparently that won't come until later. Matter of rank and privilege to the end, I guess."

He laughed drily.

"We're short on air and supplies. So I'm afraid your men will have to remain bunked on the *Cincinnati*."

"That's all right," the major said. "There are just the two of us."

"Two?"

"That's right. Me and my exec."

"That's the beautiful irony of it," Beth said. "The *Cincinnati* is almost completely automatic."

"I don't understand," he said. "An automatic ship is impossible. The electronic equipment alone would weigh tons, not to mention the impossibility of designing a memory unit to handle the complex operations of a modern ship."

"We've been out of touch too long," Beth said. "Remember what Dean said about organic memory units and the cybernetic machine, the Director, that operates the physical plant at the capitol?"

"Yes, but . . ."

"They've applied the same principle here. The new ships are built around a cybernetic unit using nervous tissue as a memory bank. It's compact enough so that they even have similar units installed in the *Cincinnati*'s life craft. After all, it's a logical development. We always knew that the human brain was a lot more efficient in storing associations than any machine could ever hope to be, even with such modern devices as the micro-transistor banks."

He felt quite sick when he saw the implications.

The conversation seemed to pass completely around him. He was aware of answering and he felt himself return the salute of Major Terse as he excused himself.

Then he merely sat for a long while, staring at the floor. Finally, Beth crossed behind the desk and laid a soft hand on his shoulder.

"You've got to get over this," she said.

"Don't you realize what this means?" he said.

"It's not what you think," she said. "You'd still need a pilot. The controls aren't that automatic yet."

"I know, but given a few years to refine the system . . . We would never have needed to risk a life. Only now, we don't dare try again. I've muffed the last chance. The EIP party back home will be screaming for my scalp and the taxpayers will never back another project after this."

He felt as if the last prop of his life had been removed. The one faint hope that he had held to was that, somehow, in some fashion the project might continue. But he had been deluding himself. It was all a lie, he knew, and the arrival of the *Cincinnati* had crystallized the knowledge that was there all along.

He didn't go to dinner. Instead, he went to his room and locked the door behind him.

Then he sat without lights for what seemed hours, feeling the darkness solidify around him like black gelatin until he felt as if he were being smothered in a deep viscous pool of lightlessness.

Finally he lay down and tried to sleep.

But he could only think of Art and Beth and the past week and the end of everything he had dreamed of, an end that was rushing upon him with every pulse beat.

He felt bone weary and he wanted to rest and forget.

Perhaps, he thought, he'd go back to the house he and Catherine had owned in the Philippines or perhaps the farm of his own father after this was over. (How many years since he'd been in Iowa?)

He used to go there quite often when he and Catherine were married, and he had been stationed in Chicago as liaison officer.

Stay away from that subject, he thought. *No use to open old scars.*

But the scars were there, scars of old wounds and new ones.

And David?

He wondered where he must be.

He thought of Art and he hoped that his own unknown son were like that. Proud and strong and . . .

Through the heavy pressure of sleep on his darkened lids, he saw Sommers' face.

And he heard someone say: *Blind!*

No, he hadn't meant that.

And there was the distant image of endless blackness like a deep river and the farthest bank was alive with the glow of a million stars.

Only the waters were black and cold and sapped the warmth from his flesh.

And he knew that they were death.

I was right, his mind said. *Someone had to make a stand, no matter who was hurt.*

Someone had to recognize that once man had withdrawn from the way to the stars, he would never return . . .

And the black waters would bound his tiny universe, sapping the strength from him, condemning him to the kind of death that comes only when you grow in upon yourself.

And Freck, General Freck who had suppressed every single human feeling for years to this end . . .

Why? something said.

I've destroyed myself too, he said.

Is this courage? . . . Or madness?

I can't answer that.

You won't . . . You're afraid . . .

Afraid?

What are you afraid of?
I don't know . . .
Panic!
Why do you want to go to the stars?
The night is cold . . . and dark . . .
The kind of night Art Sommers knows?
God, let me alone . . .
Why do you want to go to the stars?
Because . . . because . . .
Why?
I'm alone . . . so very much alone . . .
All men are alone . . .
And I don't want to die . . .

And he was suddenly awake and sitting in the blackness with the terror dancing in his mind.

He sat gripping the edge of the bed as though he were about to fall into the deepest shaft imaginable . . .

After a while he rose to his feet and wiped the sleep from his eyes. It seemed as if he were a dispassionate observer, somewhere outside his body, watching himself dress.

There was a hard tension pulling his muscles taut as he walked into the corridor and made for the Operations Office.

The Charge of Quarters looked up sleepily as he entered.

"Get me the Adjutant," he told him. Then he went into his office.

When the Adjutant's drowsy voice reported through the intercom, he gave detailed instructions on what he wanted done.

He ordered one of the spare Bechtoldt units moved up from the basement warehouse. He ordered the installation teams alerted. Then he gave the necessary orders for placing Major Terse and his exec under quarters arrest.

The Adjutant was a good soldier. His voice was startled but he said, "Yes, sir," and signed off.

Then Freck sat down to wait.

It was twenty minutes before Dean and Beth Bechtoldt pushed into the office.

"I've been expecting you," he said.

Dean's face mirrored his disbelief.

Freck looked at Beth. There was something quite strange shining in her eyes . . . not amazement exactly, but rather as though she were seeing something quite alien in him for the first time.

"Have you gone completely mad?" Dean blurted.

"I didn't expect you to understand," Freck said. "I thought Beth might."

"I'll find a way to stop you if I can."

"This is a military base, Doctor," Freck said. "The men still obey me. If necessary I can put you under quarters arrest."

"Matt," Beth said softly. "Whatever you've done before . . . well, I can understand why. I've had a lot of time to think about it. But you're not gambling with just one life now. You're risking the complement of the whole station. If you destroy the *Cincinnati*, we won't have enough air to hold out until another ship arrives."

"And you can't delay anyway," Dean said, "because the *Cincinnati* expected to use the air supply of the base to supplement its own. There's barely enough air left if we leave tomorrow."

"Don't you think I know that?" he said. "Don't you think I haven't already ripped my guts out about that? But it's a gamble that has to be taken."

"Beth," he said, his voice pleading, "I need your help for this."

She shook her head.

"No," she said. "I can't let you do this."

"Then we'll go ahead without you," he said. "We have the spare unit topside. It can be installed in twenty-four hours."

"The same thing will happen again," Dean said. "Use your head, man. This time it won't be just Sommers."

Freck ignored him.

"Beth," he said, "we can't do it without your help."

Please, God, he thought. *I can't go through with it alone.*

"Are you trying to blackmail me too?" she said.

Then she paused.

"No," she said. "You won't do it without my help . . . You're trying to give me an out, take all the responsibility on yourself. But you won't do it without me."

"What difference does that make?" he demanded.

"Matt, Matt," she said. "How can you be so completely blind."

She nodded her head slowly.

"You're both out of your minds," Dean said.

"All right," Beth said. "But without threats. You don't need them. And we'll do it my way."

"Your way," he said. "That's the way it has to be."

"We'll use the lifeboat of the *Cincinnati*. It's big enough."

"That doesn't solve the problem," Dean said. "All of the men in the base are still breathing, burning oxygen. You can't solve that one."

"We'll load everyone on the *Cincinnati*," Beth said. "Drain all the air from the station but what we need to condition the Commo Room and start the *Cincinnati* back."

"One of my men can handle the cybernetic pilot," Freck said excitedly. "We can't trust Terse."

"You're both signing your own death warrants," Dean said.

"No," Freck said. "A relief ship can reach us in time."

"And the drive will work," Beth said. "With the autopilot in the life-craft and a human pilot to direct it. That was the trouble before. Art's reactions just weren't fast enough to compensate for the field being out of phase."

"You're both out of your minds," Dean said.

Then he stopped and smiled triumphantly.

"But you don't have a pilot. There's no one on the base who can do it. No one young enough, no one trained for the job."

"He's right," Beth said.

"There's Sommers," Freck said.

"And he's blind," Dean said.

"But there you can help us."

"No!"

"You will, though," Beth said. "If Art wants it that way. You can't deny him this."

"No!" Dean almost shouted the word.

"No," he said again, but his voice was uncertain.

He looked quickly from Freck to Beth and his eyes seemed to fill with the wonder of what he saw for the first time.

"I won't do it," he said.

But his eyes didn't say it.

The vigil in the Commo Room had lasted for almost thirty-six hours. Beth was dozing at the radar post now that the ship had passed beyond its range. Except for such occasional short naps, she and Freck had been awake the whole time.

Freck stood by the radio, the microphone clutched in his hand, waiting.

When the speaker finally crackled and came alive, he didn't move.

"Pluto Base, Pluto Base," Sommers' voice called metallically.

Freck nodded and Beth, who had crossed to him, took the microphone from his hands.

"Art," she said, "are you all right?"

"Everything's fine. Worked to perfection."

"How about vortex instability?"

"Some trouble. We'll have to move further out with the bigger ships. Maybe even mount the units on orbital stations beyond Pluto. Assemble the units on the ships after they come from sunside. They'll really be star ships then. They'll never be able to land on a planet."

Freck nodded, feeling calm, unexcited.

"Tell him to orbit the ship and dump the unit," he said. "Then he can come in."

"Right," Sommers said when Beth told him.

She started to cut the transmitter.

"General . . . Matt . . ."

He took the mike.

"What is it, son?" he said, savoring the words.

"I . . . you should see the system . . . from far out, I mean . . ."

"You were looking in the wrong direction," Freck told him.

"But . . . Oh, I see . . ."

"You should have been looking the other way," he said. "Never look back. Always look where you're going."

"I'll remember that."

Freck felt for the power switch and cut the transmitter.

Then he stood, thinking that it was worth it all . . . all the years, just for this moment.

"Congratulations, Beth," he said softly. "It's your victory."

"Mine?" she said.

Just for an instant he felt the faint brush of soft fingers on his cheek.

"Not my victory, Matt," she said.

He wished he could see her face, but that was impossible. His eyes were somewhere else.

Looking at stars that man had never seen before.

"Now," he said, "we'll wait until they come for us."

"And we will tell them what we have done," she said.

I feel warm, he thought.

Warm and . . . complete.

INTERLUDE

There are others coming now, she said.

Not here?

No, further out. Always further out.

And the men will come then.

Across space . . .

And we'll be waiting for them . . .

He was conscious of the heat of the alien sun, of the way the warmth penetrated the great silver sphere that was his body. He basked in it, feeling the heat penetrate his very being. (The heat was an illusion, of course. He could be conscious of it through the sensitive thermocouples in his metal integument, but he could not really feel it as feeling is understood by organic creatures.)

And the answer to it was that simple?

You mean, why should anyone want to leave the earth, to cross space, to walk upon unknown worlds light years away?

No, she said, *that might be part of a personal answer. To be afraid of death is one thing. To want a kind of personal immortality . . . well,*

all men look for that in their children or in the knowledge that they leave some memory of themselves behind.

Well, there must be more . . . an answer for all men.

There was a certain amount of madness in his, she said.

But that doesn't answer the whole question. For one man a fear of death might be a driving passion, but what about all the others?

There was no sense to it, he saw. Why, man was little more than the most casual mite on a ball of dirt and the whole universe about him was hostile and cold, and life was ever at war with death.

And always death was the winner.

You spoke of lemmings, someone said.

Well, that's not analogous, he said. *The lemming instinct is anti-survival.*

Yet lemmings survive. The race of lemmings survives.

A kind of racial suicide impulse? No, I can't believe that. Only a desire to live can meet the challenge of space.

Perhaps you're looking at it the wrong way, she said.

But . . .

Look at it another way, she said. *Are they trying to drown themselves in the ocean or . . .*

He poised in space, feeling the beat of light on his silver body while his mind saw great hordes of the small rodents pushing into the sea and sinking into its black depths.

Or, she said, *are they trying to cross the ocean?*

IF SPRING COME NEVER

He had been walking for hours, feeling the strong pulse of leg muscles under cloth, conscious of the tiny somesthetic signals of movement and balance.

The sun was hot on his face with a tropical heat but his mind was on more immediate things . . . the knowledge that he had been searching for some time and that surely this would be the end of searching.

The street along which he walked was paved with clay bricks, the sort of street that he had not seen in years. A vague haze of yellow dust colored the air. He couldn't quite identify the place. It were as if he had just this moment arrived and was not sure of his destination.

He stopped for a moment, feeling disoriented. The street was bordered by low buildings, most of them of pastel stucco. There was a definite flavor of age about them and for an instant he felt that in some fashion he had journeyed through time and space to a point a century before.

The people on the street were dressed in colorful brief costumes. They were dark of skin with black glistening hair. The men were small with

fine regular features and startling white teeth and, as two passed him, he heard one laugh lightly while the other spoke rapidly in some light, vowel-buoyant language.

He knew that he was looking for something, but he couldn't remember for what . . . or for whom. And, startling thought, he could not remember who he was.

Along the street he saw signs with strange names like "Quirano" and "Cammilo" and at last he came to a metal post on a corner on which there was a metal sign that said: "Tarlac—15 K."

He stopped by the sign and looked quickly up and down the street. For what he had no idea. He stared down at his body, at the stiff blue trousers that encased his legs. His hands, he saw, were deeply tanned and very smooth without hair.

As he was standing, he heard someone speak behind him and he turned. Two uniformed men were approaching him warily.

"Where am I?" he demanded.

They ignored him. One spoke quickly and the other placed a hand on his chest. He struck it away and grabbed the man. The second began to shout something unintelligible.

"Where am I?" he demanded again.

"English," the first man said, his face frightened.

"Where am I?"

"Luzon," the man said. He began to speak rapidly in the other language. Suddenly he twisted away, his eyes wide with fright.

He felt the weight of the other man on his shoulders as the first grabbed for him. He felt his shirt tear away in the first man's hands as he threw the second from his back.

The first man suddenly had a heavy caliber needle gun in his hand. The weapon gave a low hiss and he felt the impact of the projectile in his chest.

But there was no pain.

He looked down at his exposed chest where the projectile had struck him. There was no blood. The flesh had been torn by the violence of the impact, but there was no blood.

Just the gleam of exposed metal.

Then he was no longer in the strange body. His muscles were alive with fire. He was conscious of an awful flash of blue light and his brain was awash with a thousand images. And multiplied a hundred-fold, he saw the body of a small man crisp and char while his hands clutched spasmodically at the open circuit box from which blue fire poured.

For an instant he was almost mad with the welter of sense impressions that flooded him. It was like seeing through the eyes of a wasp with every facet reflecting some new, dissimilar scene, with the cacophony of a million sounds tearing his ears.

He screamed and screamed.

But there was no sound of screaming.

His arm moved convulsively and in one of the worlds of sight, some great engine raised massive man-like arms and crushed the steel beams before it like butter.

And he saw towering spillgates opening and water foaming madly down sluiceways.

And a dizzying panorama of a glittering white city sprawling under his gaze far below.

And tired men, sitting in tiers under a vast ceiling supported by two towering close-set columns while a voice, his voice, droned monotonously from some machine on the edge of the rostrum in the center of the huge room.

And in one of the front seats, erect in the hard chair, his face tired . . .

Jenks . . . Marshal Jenks . . .

In his agony, he screamed, "Jenks, for God's sake, help me."

And he saw the tired men suddenly on their feet, shouting as the echoing sound of arcing circuit breakers dissolved the vision into . . .

The sight of the little man, burning and charring into a shriveled mass of charcoal.

Then he was alone in utter blackness.

He drifted in the darkness, completely exhausted. Then full consciousness returned.

My God, where am I?

There was no sound, no feeling in any part of his body. He tried to move his arms. Something in his brain told him that there was movement and he felt the illusion of change. But the signal of position, the constant feedback of the organs that tells of movement was missing.

I'm paralyzed, he thought, fighting the panic.

He tried to turn his head and nothing happened.

Then he realized that he was not breathing.

For seconds, panic again threatened to overwhelm him.

What's happened . . . happened . . . happened? His mind echoed with the words.

He felt a flicker of light and then blackness again.

Light? But there should be none. He should not be able to see.

And then he felt the return of memory, of what had happened . . . Pluto Base and the long days of waiting for the relief ship to come while the air dwindled and the long walk into the cold valley, his blinded feet moving with automaton regularity.

The sudden flood of memory should have been terrifying. Yet, somehow, his mind accepted the returning knowledge with a dull exhaustion.

The knowledge that he must be dead.

They had waited, he and Beth and Art, for the relief ship. They'd bled away most of the station's air to supply the *Cincinnati* and sealed them-

selves in the Commo Room with the remaining supply. But the margin had been too fine.

With the relief ship still a week away, they had finally realized that they could not hold out. From the still distant ship had come the suggestion, the final desperate gamble. If the body froze quickly enough before ice crystals could burst the cell walls of the tissues, there was a chance that they could be revived. It was a well-known laboratory phenomenon but . . .

But there was no alternative.

So they had donned suits and walked into the hideous cold of Pluto's surface. Then they had turned off the heating units of the suits.

He remembered the last moment of consciousness before the paralyzing cold overwhelmed him. The numbness of death dulling his brain.

But he was alive, conscious, feeling.

And in some unimaginable fashion . . . lost.

"Seems to be all right now," someone said.

"I don't know. Check the relays."

Click!

He felt a tingling where his arms should have been. He looked out over a wide expanse of concrete from an elevated position. His arms were moving, lifting, positioning a massive steel girder. Only . . . his arms were long sleeves of metal from which smaller pistons of metal, terminating in heavy claws that gripped the beam, moved fluidly.

His viewpoint shifted and he looked out over the wide plaza and past the low buildings surrounding the area. In the near distance he saw a towering pylon of white marble, thin and graceful.

And suddenly he knew where he was.

And, as if to confirm his thought, his sight swept out over the city, itemizing the confusion of pastel structures with their broad expanses of glass and austere lines, and finally fastened upon the colossal figure of a man towering above the city. The statue was black and glistening, its great obsidian muscles gleaming in the afternoon sun with glints of hidden gold.

Its head bore two faces.

The sudden recognition flooded his being with a terrible nostalgia and then a new terror. The Watcher. The towering Janus figure that stood astride the seawall in the harbor of New Rhodes, one face looking down into the capitol city, the other looking outward toward the sea and beyond.

And with the knowledge of where he was slowly came the realization of what he must be.

Click!

He felt the sharp pain of disorientation.

The deserted hall with its tiered seats now empty of tired men and . . .

Click!

He was in the machine in the plaza again and he was lowering a new beam into place. All about him he saw other machines, some like him, some with unguessed functions. They were building something—a steel framework. Once when the machine inclined, he saw stretching below him an expanse of steel, some of it already sheathed in thin slabs of pink stone.

Then his vision flashed and he was below, looking up at the machines working on the structure while a part of him delivered an endless stream of mortar through a tongued pipe and another part of him unreeled lead-sheathed cable and another part of him positioned a slab of marble near the base of the structure.

The split of identity was dizzying. A part of him was involved in each operation and yet a part was distant, seeing. He was working on some kind of monument, he realized, and the slab of stone he was positioning near the base bore an inscription:

"In Memory of . . ."

But the rest didn't register for an instant as he was suddenly plunged into darkness.

From a distance he saw a long hall filled with intricate instrument panels that hummed and flashed colored lights. He saw two men standing before one of the sections with a wheeled box which bore a confusion of dancing meters.

"Seems to be all right now," one of the men said.

"Maybe we should turn off this section," the other said.

"Not with the Senate in full session. We'll need every unit."

"Damned fool. Who was he? What was he doing here?"

"Who knows? He was burned to a crisp."

"Well, this unit had better behave itself," the first man said while the snap of relays punctuated his words.

"Or we'll have to turn off the brain."

Then blackness as the words weaved into the afterimage of the earlier scene, the lingering sight of the inscription that read:

"In Memory of . . ."

Turn off the brain.

"Matthew Freck, Elizabeth Bechtoldt, Arthur Sommers . . ."

We'll have to turn off . . .

"Who Lost Their Lives . . ."

Turn off the . . .

". . . In The Conquest Of Interstellar Space."

Turn off the brain . . .

He watched the two men wheel the test instrument down the long corridor of glowing lights and snapping relays, his sight leaping from vantage point to vantage point.

And then he was alone.

More alone than he had ever been in his life. For the moment he rested, his mind swimming in vast silences, his thoughts fragmented in a thousand small fears and tremblings.

The life of the man who had called himself Matthew Freck seemed immeasurably distant. He had only the memory of the thoughts and emotions of that person. Even his body seemed a remote memory. And his desires, his search for the meaning of his life seemed to have evaporated with that life.

There was no doubt in his mind now as to where he was. The sight of the small man burning in a blue aura of electrical fire, the hall and its intricate switchboards, the kaleidoscope of sight and sound that had assaulted his senses. And the sight of The Watcher and beyond the great statue the vast panorama of New Rhodes . . . all of these combined to reaffirm the horror of his position.

New Rhodes, the city planned for the single purpose of housing the most complex political system man had ever conceived. They'd chosen an island in the Marianas group and built the city the way one builds a house, paying attention to every possible comfort and convenience of the occupants.

And they'd planned well, those builders. The city was a giant body, ruled by a giant brain, the cybernetic machine in the central pylon in Government Plaza. The machine, the Director, ordered the thousand functions of the city: building, repair, the growing of food, the storing of records.

But in the years since it had been built, the Director had grown. It had become the central storage agency of all the massive records of system government and in the last years it had assumed information gathering functions of its own. Throughout the world from a million stationary eyes and from a hundred thousand mobile bodies, some humanoid, some completely unmanlike, it gathered billions of bits of information from which it processed a dynamic pattern of the political, social and economic activities of man on his planet Earth.

But no engineer could ever have built the memory banks needed for this mass of information. The simple matter of storage would have required a thousand cubic miles of microtransistors and circuits. But even had such a mass of information been filed, such a complex of operating instructions etched in billions of crystal strains, the problem of calling forth data, of eliciting the proper response for a particular stimulus would have been insoluble.

They had solved the problem in an unorthodox fashion. They had learned to rely on the fantastic capabilities of organic nervous systems to make the endless billions of associations and to find the needed reference in an infinite file of information bits.

No one knew exactly how the organic memory units related to the

machine that bound them. The Director had been constructed largely by empirical data. And in the Director, fed by an unending stream of surrogate, nourished and kept alive by all the fantastic resources of an advanced biochemistry, were the central nervous systems of hundreds of men, doing the work, physical, clerical, investigative, of the world capitol and to a larger extent of the world.

The nervous systems of hundreds of men, cultures without consciousness, without ego awareness, so it seemed. Only . . .

He knew differently.

In some fantastic fashion he had been lost. The essential he that contained the tiny spark called Matthew Freck. And now he was trapped in the eternity of mechanical immortality that was the Director.

Not trapped, he realized, for there was a certain freedom he had experienced already. He remembered the first instant of half-consciousness when he had found himself on a small dusty street somewhere in the tropics. Surely, not on this island, he thought, for he had never heard of villages that old in the Marianas. Perhaps in this hemisphere since it had been daylight there also. And he remembered the feeling that he had been searching for something . . . or was it someone?

And the men who had attacked him? Police, probably. Certainly, they must have recognized the body he wore for what it was and had realized that it was behaving erratically. One of them had said "Luzon" when he asked where he was. Luzon . . . that was in the Philippine Commonwealth. He remembered the period after his service on Mars when he and Catherine had lived briefly in the Philippines during his Earthside tour as an attaché with the local consul. It was strange that he should have returned there after all these years when there was nothing more to draw him there.

He was aware of something drifting on the periphery of his consciousness. He tensed, waiting for the sudden change that would hurl himself into one of those nightmare worlds and . . .

Click!

"Matt, can you hear me?"

It was a moment before he dared recognize the voice.

"Beth!" He tried to shout but no words came.

Then there was sight and he was viewing a small room from some point about waist high. A platform of some sort stretched out from his sight. The platform was covered with lined paper which extended across his vision to rolls on either side. It was several seconds before he identified the complicated lever arrangement resting on the paper as a mechanical stylus and then he knew where he was. He was in the integrator in the Interplanetary Bureau, looking out from the sensor unit of the machine.

His gaze swept past the platform and he saw them: Beth, Art, and Marshal Jenks. Somehow, he wasn't particularly surprised that they were alive. He had not really accepted their death, even after the inscription

on the monument. They were staring at the machine, waiting for some sign.

"It's no use, Beth," he heard Jenks say. He tried to shout again.

Don't panic, he thought, or they'll come and turn off your brain. The thought brought a moment of sick horror and then his mind was cold and searching.

He made a thought of movement and the stylus before his eye jerked violently.

"Look," Sommers said and they were all crowding around the platform, staring at the stylus.

"Can you hear me?" Jenks demanded.

He made the stylus jump.

He tried to control it to form a word on the paper but only a confused scrawl resulted. The stylus vibrated wildly with his anger.

"Listen to me," Jenks said. "We know where you are. I heard your voice in the Senate today—on the voder the machine uses to deliver information to the Senate in session. We've been trying to contact you ever since. Do you understand? Move once for yes, twice for no."

He moved the stylus.

"Do you know where you are?"

Move. Yes.

"And why?"

Move. Move. No.

He listened as Jenks talked, scarcely willing to believe what he was hearing.

"There was no way," Jenks said. "The body was dead and there was only the brain to save. We needed you badly. The Economic Immediacy Party is forcing a vote of confidence on the new Planetary Development Budget."

And the rest of the story. The EIP played dirty. They spread the rumor that he and Art and Beth had died and that the drive had failed. Then they bribed a surgeon to steal the part of him that had survived.

"But they weren't sure they might not still need you. After all, they knew what had happened on Pluto and an open court-martial for your part could have embarrassed the administration badly. So they hid you where we would never think of looking."

The terribleness of the story overwhelmed Freck. The days, the months of unconsciousness in the machine, the loss of thought, of individuality . . .

"We know what happened today," Beth said. "They decided they don't need you any more. They sent a man to destroy your section. Only, something went wrong."

Went wrong? No, not that way. Subconsciously he must have known that he was in danger. They wouldn't have sent a man who did not know his business. He remembered the feeling of purpose, of action. No, it

had been no accident that at the instant of murder, the small man had been burned down by an arcing short circuit.

"You must get to us," Jenks said.

"Can you control your movements?" Beth asked.

Move . . . yes. Move, move . . . no.

"You must try," Jenks said. "The final debate is tomorrow night. They're trying to ram a weakened budget through just before closure. Half of the senators are up for re-election and they want to get back to their constituency. If you can gain control of the machine, assume one of the humanoid bodies in the city, perhaps you'll be able to testify."

"But be careful," Beth said as the image before him faded.

And he was in blackness again.

He spent the night in the metal body of a caretaker, working on the banks of the mountain reservoir that served New Rhodes. The darkness and the sound of water moving lazily over the distant spillway lulled him into a reverie of thoughtless action. Occasionally, as the machine worked its way along the bank of the lake, straining debris from the water and clipping the grass along the water's edge, he caught sight of the clear sky overhead with its brilliant tropic stars.

He felt an old pain at the sight and he knew that he would never again travel those dark spaces that stretched far above him.

But there was still Art and Beth to carry on the work, to tell of the triumph in which the three of them shared. He felt a fleeting bitterness that, of the three, those two had survived the long cold and that he had been condemned to this mechanical existence.

There was no further hope for him, he knew. If they finally rescued him, at best he would find himself imprisoned in some semi-mobile device to nourish the half-alive fragment of tissue in which he existed.

But no more any of the dreams that had been a part of his life.

But there was still the coming debate in the Senate and there at least he might serve in one final way. If he could learn to control this thing in which he lived.

Tentatively, his mind reached out, testing.

And there was a wild feeling of disorientation and a confusion of sights and sounds. In a single instant his vision spanned the globe. He saw with a thousand eyes, and he wielded a thousand arms.

He saw people moving on strange streets and a boy and a girl walking in a towering forest under white moonlight and a thin dark man working on some complicated machine under a noon sun and . . .

He was walking along a broad band of sterile concrete that stretched through the remnants of jungle. He knew that he had been walking in this manner for some time and he knew that he was in the Philippines again and on the superhighway to Tarlac.

But why Tarlac?

He had the distinct feeling once more that he was looking for someone or something, but the information was lost to him. He was quite sure, however, that he was on no mission for the Director.

He stayed with the body for an hour as it wandered through the darkened streets of the village. He had no conscious control as it entered a bright metal and glass building whose sign said "Police." He watched at a distance as the body talked at some length in Tagalog with the sleepy-looking officer on duty.

He heard himself ask for a man named David Carrswold, but the name meant nothing to him. The man, the officer told him, had moved. Two years ago. North of Dagupan. On the gulf.

The body turned and left the station. With an effort he pulled himself from the body and he was again hanging in the blackness of the Director.

But only for an instant.

He was looking out over a huddled group of three men, crouched over a machine which slowly unreeled a yellow sheet of paper.

"Damn," said the short man with the fringe of dirty white hair.

"The machine is never wrong," the tall emaciated one said.

"With him in it?" demanded the third. He was squat and Oriental looking.

"Well, that was his fault." The short man gestured at the tall thin man.

"That he should be able to protect himself?" the thin man demanded. "The decision to do away with him was sound."

"No one is to blame," the Oriental said. "The facts are these. The attack has somehow made him aware of himself again. And the machine says that the vote will go against us if he testifies."

The short man shuddered.

"I don't like it," he said. "He could be anywhere."

He stared at the integrator. For an instant Freck felt like a thief suddenly caught in the act. He started to withdraw and something moved in his mind. The stylus, tracing coded lines on the yellow paper, jumped violently and there was the sound of tearing paper.

The three men looked at each other in alarm.

"Oh, my God, my God," the short man said.

The thin man grabbed a chair near him and turned toward the machine.

"Damn you," he yelled, "why don't you stay dead?"

He brought the chair down on the visual pickup with a shattering crash.

He had to protect himself.

And to do this he must control the Director.

Tentatively he extended his consciousness outward, exploring the strange half-mind of which he was a part. At first the bodiless feeling

of motion was frightening and he felt a faint vertigo. He imagined that his personality were an expanding sphere which thrust out psuedopods before him.

It seemed then as if he were walking and the mind of the Director became a web of endless corridors, twisting and branching in fantastic complexity.

Some of the corridors down which he moved ended in obstructions beyond which he could not proceed and in each instance he was forced to retrace his steps to the spot where the corridor had branched. Others seemed quite open and some were faintly familiar.

He was not sure exactly of what he was seeking, but he sent a voiceless call speeding ahead of him, wondering if perhaps among the countless minds that fused to form the consciousness of the Director, there might not be those who still thought separately and felt pain and were aware.

All at once he was in a vast hall that stretched to the limits of his vision. And they were crowding around him, the hundreds of faceless men with their lips moving and their speech a vague rustling in his ears.

There's no such place, his terrified thoughts shouted.

The shadowed hall flickered for an instant. Its distant walls became ragged and a sudden wind whistled overhead.

Listen he said.

The faceless men rustled in the stillness. He felt the mist of resignation that enveloped them. Vainly he turned, looking for a face, for one single sign of individuality.

Listen to me he said. *There's a way out if you'll help.*

His words echoed from the vastness overhead. A distant murmur swelled through the hall.

No . . . no . . . no more.

Yes, he shouted, *but you've got to help me.*

It was a terrible thing, he thought, their utter sameness. Why, they were as bleached and as featureless as those animals that lived in lightless subterranean caves.

You've got to help me, he said again.

How? the rustling question sounded. *Why?*

He was suddenly angry and he was striking out, raining heavy blows upon the pale men, cursing them, damning them while the terrible thought that this might be his fate filled him with a frenzied horror.

The faceless men fell back before him, their bodies livid with the marks of his blows.

Now, he said, his voice still shaking, *now, you will do what I say.*

They stood silently, waiting.

Exactly as I say.

They rustled softly, agreeing.

He realized that they were afraid of him and he felt very strong.

Afterwards, feeling a new sense of power, he looked out over the city

from the eyes of The Watcher. He saw the countless ant-like figures scurrying in the streets below and the scuttling vehicles that seemed like so many beetles from his height.

He realized then that this was the city over which he watched and that, with the mastery of the Director, he governed its fate as surely as if he held the fragile thing in his giant's fist. For in the city were his arms and his powerful fingers that could crush and in the city and throughout the world were his eyes that saw and were not seen.

He looked through the eyes in the other face of The Watcher, hoping to see the floating hydrophonic islands far to sea which grew the food of his city. Everything connected with New Rhodes was suddenly of vast importance to him. The head of the statue, however, had been inclined by the sculptor and the seaward eyes rested only on featureless blue.

From afar the pale men whom he had set to watching the three men he had seen before the integrator whispered their doings. He smiled, thinking that no one, not even they, could escape the omniscience of the Director . . . of him.

It was a mark of how completely the people of the city accepted the creatures of the Director that no one halted the vaguely humanoid body that he chose as it walked through the city to the Interplanetary Building. There was no feeling in the metal body, but he was conscious of the cold emotionlessness of his face, of the inhuman beauty of the steel features that he wore, of the pulsing strength of his iron sinews.

He entered the building and chose the escalator to the third floor. He found the office that he wanted and pushed through without knocking.

Jenks and Beth and Art Sommers turned to face him.

When they didn't speak, he said, "Even Lazarus had a better reception than this."

"Matt," Beth said breathlessly. She looked at the cold mask that he wore.

"Is it really you?" she said wonderingly.

"Sit down," he said, "and let us talk."

"The final debate is tonight," Jenks said, "and you three must be there or we've lost everything."

"Why should they want to withdraw the colonies?" he asked.

"The official version," Art said, "is that the resources we're wasting on space travel are needed here to take care of the increasing world population."

"But the men involved," Jenks said, "will profit from the government subsidies to develop their land holdings."

"And there's Sung of the Asian Combine," Beth said. "He's in this strictly for power. He wants to be the next World Executor and he can't do that unless he topples the present administration."

Freck described the Oriental whom he had seen before the integrator. Jenks identified him easily.

"Don't worry about them," he said. "They won't bother us any more."

He told them what he had done.

"And the others in the Director?" Beth said. "They still remember?"

"In a way," he said.

"Then we must do something about them after we've settled this other," Jenks said.

"What?" he asked.

"Well, a return to a humanoid body like the one you're wearing. We can do that. Actually, make it more perfect than any organic body . . . nearly immortal."

He shook his head.

"What kind of a life would that be? A useless ward of the state?"

"It wouldn't be like that," Sommers said. "You'll all be needed."

Freck shook his head again.

"Look," Jenks said, "in the year since Pluto, we've built bigger and faster ships. Triplanet and the other combines have ships that can make the Pluto run in four days. Only they're too fast. Human pilots can't handle them at top speed. Human reactions aren't fast enough."

"Matt," Beth said, "yours would be."

For a moment the idea was quite exciting. To pilot a ship again. He'd never thought that possible after he had been retired from pilot status because of his age. He remembered the surge of acceleration and the heady feel of having all that power at his fingers, the sort of thrill no pilot had really felt in the last ten years.

"I wish I could believe you," he said.

He left them and made his way back to the pylon of the Director. Only after his body had closed the glass door of the storage case in which it rested did he make the change to the lightlessness of his other existence.

The pale men came to him and reported the doings of the three men who had gathered in a tiny room on the edge of the city and planned new ways to meet the threat of his consciousness.

He gave thorough directions on guarding the nutrient pumps and the power house of the Director and he set a screening guard on the great relay room where the small man had once tried to kill him.

Then he flashed for an instant to the massive machine that labored tirelessly on the memorial to the three who had been lost. There was an exciting strength in the sure movements of the machine. The heavy claw-like appendages and the ungainly grasping legs along the base of the machine coordinated in a mindless wonder that amazed him. He watched the arms slide smoothly up and down their cylinder sleeves, sometimes extending to a giant reach of over twenty feet.

For a long time he let himself be lulled by the endless mechanical movement. Finally he switched to the seaward face of The Watcher. The

endless cobalt sky with its faint wisps of clouds rolled without end above him and he thought of what Beth had said about the new ships. The prospect was exciting and yet, there was a definite emptiness to it also.

For, he wondered, what did it really mean to him, this new attack on space. An extension of that painful life that had come to an end on the cold wastes before Pluto Base. There had been some reason to the struggle then, the feeling that what he did was a part of what all men were striving for.

But he wasn't like Art and Beth now, governed by the mortal limitations of flesh. It would be too easy to forget the chemical surges of anger and hate and love that ruled an organic body, to become cold and other than human and . . . perfect.

Well, there had been some reason for the struggle, some investment in this race of organic men for which he worked.

There was the memory of the highway through the Luzon jungle and of the metal and plastic body standing silently in a grove of trees, waiting for him to renew the search for which he had no name.

Only, he had always known in the depths of his mind for what he was searching and now the recognition was all the more painful.

The name of David Carrswold. How long since he had heard that name? It had been Catherine's maiden name, of course, and it was achingly symbolic of how completely even his son had withdrawn from him that he had assumed that name.

His son—strange words—and the imagined image of the young man with strong young features and a lean body, muscled and brown with jet black hair and eyes that sparkled with the humor that Catherine's eyes had once held.

He let himself slide effortlessly across the intervening ocean and into the body that stood waiting. Then he found the gravel path leading up to the sprawling house.

The veranda creaked under the heaviness of his body. He found a button and keyed a set of muffled chimes.

He waited, thinking that it was like coming home again.

To a home he'd never really had.

And his thoughts echoed with the phrase he had not voiced in twenty years.

Catherine, he thought . . . *Kate* . . . *I've come home.*

He stood in the darkness of the veranda, waiting for an answer to his ring. All about him were the night sounds of birds and insects and he felt a light breeze from the nearby ocean. If he listened closely, he found he could hear the roar of breakers.

There was a subdued light from the living room streaming through the glass of the door, but there was no other sign of occupancy. After

a moment he sounded the chimes again but there was still no evidence of anyone inside.

The house must be at least seventy years old, he thought, inspecting the sprawling veranda. The architecture was timeless in this rear area, but there was a feel of a more distant age about the house.

He was about to turn and leave when he heard a soft movement behind him and he turned. Someone was coming up the gravel path, someone with a light airy step that scattered the gravel with an abandon that told him, even before he saw her, that the walker must be very young.

She stopped and said, "Oh, you scared me."

She was quite small and very thin. Her feet were bare and the long thin dress she wore held to her body in the breeze. Her hair was limp and glistened wetly in the moonlight. She carried a heavy beach towel in her hand and, as she stood looking at him, she scrubbed her hair vigorously.

"I was swimming," she said.

"I'm Diane," she added, "Diane Carrswold, I mean."

"That's a nice name," he said clumsily. "Is your father home?"

"No," she said. "Do you always come visiting this late?"

Then she laughed a light trilling laugh.

"That wasn't nice at all, was it?" she said.

"That's all right," he said. "It's just that I had to see him tonight."

"He's away," she said.

"That's too bad," he said. "How about your mother?"

She stood silently for a moment, toweling her arms.

"She's away too," she said. "With him."

"Oh," he said. She must have read the disappointment in his voice.

"You can come in if you want to," she said.

"Well," he said, "it's after dark and . . ."

"That's all right," she said. "They'll be back soon."

She mounted the steps and brushed past him. He followed her into a living room that was a nondescript blend of free form furniture and native rattan. Strangely enough, the pieces didn't seem at all incongruous together. The wall panels glowed softly as she activated them. He lowered himself carefully into a strong-looking teak chair and stared moodily at the room.

When she saw that he was looking at the long Chinese scroll with the flat-perspective landscape in blacks and browns, she said, "I like that too."

She found a seat on the edge of a hassock and said,

"My, you look very serious. Don't you smile?"

"Sometimes," he said. "When do you expect them back?"

"Oh, soon," she said.

"How old are you?" he asked.

"Eight," she said.

Then there was an awkward pause.

"Do you know my father?" she asked.

"Well, not exactly," he said. "I'm a friend of his father."

"Oh," she said, "I'm not sure he will like that."

"Why?"

"I don't know," she said. "But he would never let anyone mention him . . . his father, I mean."

Could he have hated him that much? Freck thought. Or Catherine. Could the years have brought such bitterness to her that she had raised her son to despise his father's memory? It seemed for a moment as if she had reached out of the dead years deliberately to inflict this final hurt. If she could have understood, could have felt the way he did. Well, he could understand her reaction in a way. But his own son . . .

"I can't stay," he said, getting to his feet.

"Oh, that's them now," she said as he heard the faint whirr of helicopter blades above the house.

"I have to leave," he said, feeling a sudden panic.

"No," she said. "Stay just a minute."

He stood silently, feeling awkward in his unnatural body as there was a sound from the rear of the house and the murmur of speech. He turned as the man and the woman entered from the rear.

For a moment he was startled. They were both old.

"Hello," the grey-haired man said in a deep voice. "Who's this?"

"This is Mr. . . ." Diane laughed. "I don't know his name."

"Fre . . . Fretter," he said, suddenly confused.

"What can I do for you?" the man said. "I'm Diane's grandfather, Peter Buehrle, and this is my wife."

Mrs. Buehrle smiled uncertainly.

"I was waiting to see Mr. Carrswold," he said.

"Business?" the older man asked.

"No," he said. "I'm . . . well, you might say, a friend of the family. Diane said he would be back soon."

"Yes," Mrs. Buehrle said, "she would say that."

He looked at her questioningly.

"Diane," Mr. Buehrle said, "go see if there's something cold in the refrigerator."

As the girl ran from the room, Buehrle said, "It must have been very important for you to make the trip out here."

"The police in Dagupan told me he had moved here."

"Yes," Mrs. Buehrle said. "He and our daughter Anne were stationed here as marine biologists for the World Resource Board."

"Were?" he said.

"Diane . . . well," Mr. Buehrle paused. "She still thinks that someday they'll come back. She saw them take the boat out that day."

"It was a small storm, really," Mrs. Buehrle said, "and they were both quite familiar with boats. I don't understand how it happened."

He listened as the story unfolded. There was suddenly a feeling of emptiness in him, a sense of terrible loss.

He hadn't realized until this moment how important the simple knowledge of his son's existence had become to him. The knowledge that even before his son's death, his own name had died had been a bitter discovery, but now even the single thread that bound him by ties of flesh to unborn generations had died as surely.

When Diane returned, the Buehrles changed the subject quickly. He wondered how long they would keep to the pretense. To encourage her in such a delusion seemed needlessly cruel.

He saw that it was well after eight o'clock and he knew that he must be far from the house before he abandoned this body for the last time. It was enough that he had maintained the masquerade as long as he had.

When the Buehrles invited him to spend the night, he at first refused. Finally at their polite insistence, he agreed. He realized that by remaining in the house that night, he could abandon his body that much quicker and return to New Rhodes.

They talked for a short while longer and then Mrs. Buehrle showed him to a large room paneled in some mottled straited wood. As soon as she had left, he tried the bed, but the frame creaked alarmingly under his weight. He found a seat on a heavy chest near sliding glass panels that opened onto a stone patio. He could see the beach through the glass and he sat for long minutes, lost in mindless contemplation of the moonlighted breakers foaming onto the sands.

Finally he made the change that returned him to New Rhodes.

He activated the quasi-humanoid body in the pylon and walked through the brightly lighted streets toward the Interplanetary Building. He knew that he was already late and that the Senate night session on the appropriation bill must have already begun.

Beth and Sommers were waiting for him in Jenks' office.

"It's no use," Beth said tiredly.

"What do you mean?"

"Haven't you been to the Senate building yet?"

"No."

"Security guards are posted at all the entrances."

"With metal detectors and weapons," Sommers said.

"Sung has spread the rumor that the Director is behaving erratically," Beth said.

"You can't get in," Sommers said. "Not in that body."

"And that's the trump card," Beth said tiredly.

"No it isn't," he said.

Swiftly he flashed to the Senate chambers. The great room was filled with men, sitting boredly while one of the members on the rostrum spoke in a monotone. He tried to activate the voder, to call out to Jenks who had assumed his position in the front row.

But no sound came and he realized that here too Sung had anticipated him.

He returned to the body in Jenks' office and told them of his failure.

"Then it's no use," Sommers said.

"What about you?" he demanded. "You two can certainly give the testimony that Jenks needs."

"We could," Beth said, "if we weren't blocked as effectively as you."

"What do you mean?"

"Don't you know?" Sommers asked.

He walked to the boy and stared closely at him. Even the knowledge of his son's death hadn't been as shocking as this for he had never really known his son. And, through the sudden fury at being cheated once again, he saw that in Sommers he had in an impossible fashion seen a sort of vicarious continuation of this flesh of his in the struggle he had waged all his life.

The hate he felt then was unreasoning.

"Robot," he said, feeling the sick horror of the word.

Sommers' face twisted in pain and anger. His voice was quiet and deadly.

"What the hell do you think you are?" he said.

And in his hate and sudden fear, he flashed to the blackness of the Director. Almost instantly, his mind was bathed in fire and a cold methodical fury raced through his thoughts.

There was a knife-like thought of . . .

Destruction and death!

He found the source and flashed to it. The pale men were there, calling him. From the pickup high on the atomic pile that fueled the Director, he saw the machine that served as prime mover in the power house, its jet black body a dark streak of frenzy.

The machine had been designed to handle the radioactive ingots of the pile. Its massive hands, half the size of a man's body, had never been intended for the hysteria of destruction, but they were crushing instruments now, pulping the raw flesh of the tall thin man and the short bald man into red jelly.

His mind closed with the blood lust of the pale men and then he was with them.

In an insanity of fury, his great metal fists battered the red-stained concrete, driving the bloody flesh into stone.

The aftermath of fury was hate . . .

Hate and an unbelievable sense of power.

He looked out over the light-specked blackness of the city and felt the hidden surge of energy in the thousand mechanical members that were his world-girdling body.

The pale men were all about him, sharing in his eyes that from the

great obsidian statue looked out over the weak organic life that infested the city below.

And there was the thought, rustling in his ears: "How easy they are to kill."

There was still a part of him that felt the loss of that other life, the death of hope in his son, in Art and Beth, the knowledge that the blackness far above was the final victor.

But death was far and distant and he was deathless.

Unhuman.

Godlike, the pale men whispered.

With no kinship to the little animals below, no comradeship with their small sweaty lives, no understanding of their endless dirty little rites of eating, sleeping, procreating.

For like the pale men, he too had become timeless, perfect, complete in himself with the final divorcement from all that bound him to the soft imperfect flesh.

But then he realized that the divorcement was not complete, that there remained one action to sever the bonds that tied him to the perspiring little creatures, wallowing in the dusty city below.

And he found it easy to flow across city and ocean and jungles, steaming in the night's heat, to the tiny room where his body sat rigidly in the moonlight streaming from the patio.

He felt a tense exhilaration as he slid the glass panel aside and stepped onto the patio. The night was warm with a faint chill moistness drifting in from the jungle.

For the first time, he was aware of the perfection of this body he had taken, of the easy fluidity of synthetic muscles as they flexed sensuously under his trousers. He pulled the light shirt from his body and walked toward the sound of the ocean.

He looked down at himself as he walked. It was a young body with full swelling chest, with tight ridges of muscles lacing the belly and sharply accented biceps that rippled under the plastic skin.

He was on the beach then. He stopped to roll up his trousers, feeling the sheer animalness of this synthetic flesh he wore.

And what better way to complete the separation from this painful humanity, he thought, than with this body of ageless youth which for an instant he wore in the winter of his human existence?

In the winter of humanity.

And spring would come never again.

He looked out over the moon-bright water as the slow steady beat of the surf filled his ears. A night bird cried in the distance, its shrill call cutting cleanly across the water. He smiled with his cold mouth, remembering the restless nights long ago on another Lingayen beach when he had walked with Catherine under the same moon, his young body glistening wetly from the water, the cold night breezes on his back.

He looked out, testing the water with his eyes. Across the bay a low freighter moved silent and ghostlike, outlined against the glow of the horizon, poised for an instant like a cardboard toy on the fingernail-thin edge of a cardboard sea.

To his right there was a weathered stone that glowed chalk-white in the moonlight and past it a group of iron-thewed piles sinking with a quiet age into the devouring waters. He waded out to the nearest pile, a massive cylinder of ragged wood, and fastened his arms about it. It had decayed below the water line and when he applied pressure, it snapped in a flood of floating splinters.

The log floated high in the water and by grasping it with his arms, he was able to draw up his legs and float, his body rocking in the swells from the beach.

He looked toward the beach and felt a sudden annoyance at the white shape that was moving down from the house. Then he saw that it was the girl, Diane, her white feet flickering along the ruffled sand.

She stopped at the edge of the water and called out.

"Hello."

He did not answer.

After a moment she began to pull the thin dress she wore over her head. She draped it carefully on the white rock and waded into the water. Her small nude figure was white in the moonlight.

In a moment she was beside him, holding onto the log and breathing lightly.

"I saw you leave from my window," she said.

"You shouldn't be up," he said.

"I swim at night a lot," she said. "I like to."

He said nothing.

She looked at him in an odd fashion and pushed from the log. He watched her move gracefully through the water, seeing the light foam of her wake fade into the darker water.

Then she was back, holding to the log.

"Why don't you swim?" she asked.

"Presently," he said.

The low waves washed over his arms. He watched them glide toward him, each bearing on its tip a glistening diamond. He let his heavy body hang flaccid in the water, arms and legs dangling, head back, feeling the lazy rock of the ancient ocean.

He was annoyed that she had intruded. This was a silent personal thing that he planned and she had made it less satisfying by her intrusion.

But his final death had to be experienced and there was no returning.

He felt his arms lose their grip on the log and then he was dropping swiftly below the surface and all sounds were muffled and distant.

The water had a pale green transparency that seemed to seep into his

being. It was like being reborn to sink into the green depths, to feel the water close distantly over his head like an all-enfolding womb.

He heard the distant vibrations of her splashing and then the slim white body darted down into the green depths. He saw her eyes, wide with fright, as she closed on him. Vainly she began to struggle with his impossibly heavy body.

For a moment he didn't realize what was happening. Then he saw that she thought he must be drowning and that with all the pathetically small strength of her body, she was trying to save him.

It was quite futile, of course, and her movements began to show fatigue. He saw her mouth open as if to shout and a great gout of bubbles spurted toward the surface.

She was suddenly struggling violently as her mouth gave up more air. The small eyes became wide with terror.

Quite without thinking he grasped her struggling figure and tried to rise, but there was no buoyancy in his body. He began to move quickly through the water toward the shore, holding her limp body high above his head. He felt the water part around his arms and he knew that she was once again in the open air. He rose from the ocean, the cold water rushing slickly from his body. He held her lightly in his arms as he walked toward the shore.

He checked her respiration briefly, positioned her head on her arm, and began to give her artificial respiration. As soon as the reflex pattern was established, he set the body he wore to continue the action.

His consciousness flashed to The Watcher in an instant.

He was filled with a new excitement. The thought of what he had almost done repelled him.

Then he was in the Senate chambers. The little Oriental he knew as Sung was speaking from the rostrum and glaring triumphantly at Jenks who sat unattended in the first row. He tried again to speak but the voder was still mute.

His eyes flashed around the chamber, cataloging the bored faces, the vastness of the room, the two slim pillars supporting the high ceiling.

Then he knew the answer.

He was in the great machine on the plaza as it moved from the towering memorial and set its heavy metal feet upon the pavement. He moved ponderously toward the Senate building. His ears scarcely registered the cries of alarm as he reached the broad steps and clumsily began to mount them.

He swept the guards before the great bronze doors aside and saw them pick themselves up. One ran down the stairs while the other drew his sidearm and began to fire. The needle pellets spattered harmlessly against the metal sides of the machine.

He aimed a blow at the bronze doors and saw them fold inward as if they were made of foil.

Then he was pushing down the center aisle, his massive body making a shambles of the seats on either side.

He stopped between the tall pillars and pointed a massive arm at Jenks. The man leaped to his feet. All around him the Senators stood frozen in their places. A few started to move toward the door.

In that instant Jenks must have realized what was happening. He ran from his place and mounted the dais. Sung held out a hand to stop him and he sent the little man sprawling. Then he was before the voder and working with the switches on its face.

Freck in his metal body extended the pistoned arms. They found purchase on the slim columns and he stood, like a giant metal Samson as his voice came to him.

"Stop," he shouted. The word echoed from the vaulted ceiling.

The Senators looked at him in horror while . . .

While a part of him walked up from that distant Lingayen beach with the small girl who was part of his flesh and who would bear some living part of him through the ages.

And she said, "I'm sorry."

"You helped," he said. "Much more than you know."

"Oh, I'm glad," she said.

"I'll walk you back to the house," he said, taking her hand.

She laughed lightly and looked up at the sky.

"It's too nice to go to sleep. Isn't the moon bright."

He followed her gaze.

"Father used to say it was another world," she said, "and that there were men there."

"That's right," he said, "and there are men much farther away than that, and men are going still farther out."

"Isn't that wonderful?" she said.

She looked up at the moon.

"Another world," she said. "Wouldn't you like to go there?"

And for an instant he looked from the eyes of The Watcher, not out over the city below, but into the clear tropic night with its wealth of blazing stars, gleaming like a million jewels on crumpled velvet.

And his voice thundered in the Senate Chambers.

"Take your seats or I'll bring the roof down on us all."

He stood in the great metal body with his arms braced against the tall pillars while the frightened men resumed their seats.

"You have been lied to," he said, his voice filling the chamber with its resonance. "The stars belong to us now."

"We need only," he said, "reach out and take them."

INTERLUDE

Yes, he agreed, *there was a kind of madness about it.*

But you have to separate the motives, she said. *There's the desire for personal immortality and the desire for the immortality of the race.*

Well, in a way there was both in the group mind of the Director.

No, she said, *that was the barest kind of life, an unnatural thing. Men were never meant for that sort of thing.*

Unnatural?

Unnatural because the pale men would never have wanted the stars.

He looked out on the blazing star they circled, thinking of the flood of small ships scattering throughout the near galaxies.

And the men who are going?

Remember the lemmings?

Well, the answer there is easy. Population pressure. They breed to the limits of their environment.

And, she said, *that's a basic drive of all animals.*

No, he said, *I won't believe that. There's something more to man's drive for the stars than that.*

Is that so horrible? she asked. *The greatness of this animal called man is that he can fulfill his purpose so completely.*

And in his loneliness, he creates others equally lonely?

Well, he's still seeking, she said.

For what?

Why do men have sons? Personal immortality, vicariously at least. We've said that.

Identification with the race, he offered.

But there's one step further, she said.

And this, she said, *is what all men search for in their secret hearts.*

SEA CHANGE

Gleaming . . . like a needle of fire . . .

Whose voice? He didn't know.

The interstellar . . . two of them . . .

They were talking all at once then, their voices blending chaotically.

They're moving one out beyond Pluto for the test, someone said.

Beautiful . . . We're waiting . . . waiting.

That was her voice. He felt coldness within his chest.

That was the terrible part of his isolation, he thought. He could still

hear everything. Not just in the Superintendent's office in Marsopolis where he sat.

But everywhere.

All the whispers of sound, spanning the system on pulses of e-cube radio. All the half-words, half-thoughts from the inner planets to the space stations far beyond Pluto.

And the loneliness was a sudden agonizing thing, sobbing in his ear. The loneliness and the loss of two worlds.

Not that he couldn't shut out the voices if he wished, the distant voices that webbed space with the cubed speed of light but . . . might as well shut out all thought of living and seek the mindless foetal state of merely being.

There was the voice droning cargo numbers. He made the small mental change and the tight mass of transistors, buried deep in his metal and plastic body, brought the voice in clear and sharp. It was a Triplanet ship in the twilight belt of Mercury.

And he had a fleeting image of flame-shriveled plains under a blinding monster sun.

Then there was the voice, saying, *Okay . . . bearing three-ought-six and count down ten to free fall . . .*

That one was beyond Saturn . . . Remembered vision of bright ribbons of light, lacing a startling blue sky.

He thought, *I'll never see that again.*

And: *Space Beacon Three to MRX two two . . . Space Beacon Three . . . Bishop to queen's rook four . . .*

And there was the soft voice, the different voice: *Matt . . . Matt . . . Where are you? . . . Matt, come in . . . Oh, Matt . . .*

But he ignored that one.

Instead he looked at the receptionist and watched her fingers dance intricate patterns over the keyboard of her electric typewriter.

Matt . . . Matt . . .

No, no more, he thought. There was nothing there for him but bitterness. The isolation of being apart from humanity. The loneliness. Love? Affection? The words had no meaning in that existence.

It had become a ritual with him, he realized, this trip the first Tuesday of every month down through the silent Martian town to the Triplanet Port. A formalized tribute to something that was quite dead. An empty ritual, weak ineffectual gesture.

He had known that morning that there would be nothing.

"No, nothing," the girl in the Super's office had said. "Nothing at all."

Nothing for him in his grey robot world of no-touch, no-taste.

She looked at him the way they all did, the ones who saw past the clever human disguise of plastic face and muted eyes.

He waited . . . listening.

When the Super came in, he smiled and said, "Hello, Matt," and then, with a gesture of his head, "Come on in."

The girl frowned her silent disapproval.

After they found seats, the Super said, "Why don't you go home?"

"Home?"

"Back to Earth."

"Is that home?"

The voices whispered in his ear while the Super frowned and puffed a black cigar alight.

And: . . . *Matt . . . Matt . . . Knight four to . . . three down . . . two down . . . Out past Deimos, the sun blazing on its sides . . . Matt . . .*

"What are you trying to do?" the Super demanded. "Cut yourself off from the world completely?"

"That's been done already," he said. "Very effectively."

"Look, let's be brutal about it. We don't owe you anything."

"No," he said.

"It was a business arrangement purely," the Super said. "And if this hadn't been done," he gestured at the body Freck wore, "Matthew Freck would have been little more than a page in some dusty official records."

"Or worse," he added.

"I suppose so," Freck said.

"You could go back tomorrow. To Earth. To a new life. No one has to know who you are or what you are unless you tell them."

Freck looked down at his hands, the carefully veined, very human hands and the hard muscled thighs where the cellotherm trousers hugged his legs.

"The technicians did a fine job," he said. "Actually, it's better than my old body. Younger and stronger. And it'll last longer. But . . ."

He flexed his hands sensuously, watching the way the smooth bands of contractile plastic articulated his fingers.

"But the masquerade won't work. We were made for one thing."

"I can't change Company policy," the Super said. "Oh, I know the experiment didn't work. Actually technology is moving too fast. It was a bad compromise anyway. We needed something a little faster, more than human to pilot the new ships. Human reactions, the speed of a nerve impulse wasn't sufficient, electronic equipment was too bulky, and the organic memory units we built for our first cybernetic pilots didn't have enough initiative. That's why we jumped at the chance to use your people when Marshal Jenks first came to us. But we weren't willing to face facts. We tried to compromise . . . keep the human form."

"Well, we gave you what you needed then. You do owe us something in return," he said.

"We lived up to our contract," the Super said. "With you and a hun-

dred like you whom we could save. All in exchange for the ability only you had. It was a fair trade."

"All right, give me a ship then. That's all I want."

"I told you before. Direct hook-up."

"No. If you knew what you were asking . . ."

"Look, one of the interstellars is being tested right this minute. And there are the stations beyond Pluto."

"The stations? That's like the Director all over again. Completely immobile. What kind of a life would that be, existing as a self-contained unit for years on end without the least contact with humanity?"

"The stations are not useless," the Super said. He leaned forward and slapped his palm on the surface of his desk.

"You of all people should know the Bechtoldt Drive can't be installed within the system's heavy gravitational fields. That's why we need the stations. They're set up to install the drive after the ship leaves the system proper on its atomic motors."

"You still haven't answered my question."

"*Stargazer I* is outbound for one of the trans-Plutonian stations now. *Stargazer II* will follow in a few days."

"So?"

"You can have one of them if you want it. Oh, don't get the idea that this is a handout. We don't play that way. The last two ships blew up because the pilots weren't skilled enough to handle the hook-up. We need the best and from past performance, that's you."

He paused for a long second.

"You may as well know," the Super said. "We've put all our eggs in those two baskets. We've been losing political strength in the past three years and, if either one fails, Triplanet and the other combines stand to lose their subsidies from the government. Then it'll be a century before anyone tries again, if they ever do. We're tired of being tied to a petty nine planets. We're doing the thing you worked for all your life. We're going to the stars now . . . and you can still be a part of that."

"That used to mean something to me," he said, "but after a time, you start losing your identification with humanity and its drives."

When he started to rise, the Super said, "You know you can't operate a modern ship or station, tied down to a humanoid body. It's too inefficient. You've got to become a part of the setup."

"I've told you before. I can't do that."

"What are you afraid of? The loneliness?"

"I've been lonely before," he said.

"What then?"

"What am I afraid of?" He smiled his mechanical smile. "Something you could never understand. I'm afraid of what's happened to me already."

The Super was silent.

"When you start losing the basic emotions, the basic ways of thinking that make you human, well . . . What am I afraid of?"

"I'm afraid of becoming more of a machine," he said.

And before the Super could say more, he left.

Outside he zipped up the cellotherm jacket and adjusted his respirator. Then he advanced the setting of the rheostat on the chest of his jacket until the small jewel light above the mechanism glowed in the morning's half-dusk. He had no need for the heat that the clothing furnished, of course, but the masquerade, the pretending to be wholly human would have been incomplete without this vital touch.

All the way back through the pearl grey light, he listened to the many voices flashing back and forth across the ship lanes. He heard the snatches of commerce from a hundred separate ports and he followed in his mind's eye the swift progress of *Stargazer I* out past the orbit of Uranus to her rendezvous with the station that would fit her with the Bechtoldt Drive.

And he thought, *Lord, if I could make the jump with her*, and then, *But not at that price, not for what it's cost the others, Jim and Martha and Art and . . . Beth. (Forget the name . . . forget the name . . . lost from you like all the others . . .)*

The city had turned to full life in the interval he had spent in the Super's office and he passed numerous hurrying figures, bear-like in cellotherm clothing and transparent respirators. They ignored him completely and for a moment he had an insane impulse to tear the respirator from his face and stand waiting . . .

Waiting savagely, defiantly for someone to notice him.

The tortured writhings of neon signs glowed along the wide streets and occasionally an electric run-about, balanced lightly on two wheels, passed him with a soft whirr, its headlights cutting a bright swath across his path. He had never become fully accustomed to the twilight of the Martian day. But that was the fault of the technicians who had built his body. In their pathetic desire to ape the human body, they had often built in human limitations as well as human strengths.

He stopped a moment before a shop, idly inspecting the window display of small things, fragile and alien, from the dead Martian towns to the north. The shop window, he realized, was as much out of place here as the street and the individual pressurized buildings that lined it. It would have been better, as someone had suggested, to house the entire city under one pressurized unit. But this was how the Martian settlements had started and men still held to the diffuse habits more suited to another world.

Well, that was a common trait that he shared with his race. The Super was right, of course. He was as much of a compromise as was the town. The old habits of thought prevailing, molding the new forms.

He thought that he should get something to eat. He hadn't had break-

fast before setting out for the port. They'd managed to give him a sense of hunger, though taste had been too elusive for them to capture.

But the thought of food was somehow unpleasant.

And then he thought perhaps he should get drunk.

But even that didn't seem too satisfying.

But he walked on for a distance and found a bar that was open and he walked in. He shed his respirator in the airlock and, under the half-watchful eyes of a small fat man, fumbling with his wallet, he pretended to turn off the rheostat of his suit.

Then he went inside, nodded vaguely at the bored bartender and sat at a corner table. After the bartender had brought him a whiskey and water, he sat and listened.

Six and seven . . . and twenty-ought-three . . .

. . . read you . . .

. . . and out there you see nothing, absolutely nothing. It's like . . .

Matt . . . Matt . . .

. . . to king's knight four . . . check in three . . .

Matt . . .

And for the first time in weeks, he made the change. He could talk without making an audible sound, which was fortunate. A matter of subverbalizing.

He said, silently, *Come on in.*

Matt, where are you?

In a bar.

I'm far out . . . very far out. The sun's like a pinhole in a black sheet.

I think I'm going to get very drunk.

Why?

Because I want to. Isn't that reason enough? Because it's the one wholly, completely human thing that I can do well.

I've missed you.

Missed me? My voice perhaps. There's little else.

You should be out here with us . . . with me and Art . . . , she said breathlessly. *They're bringing the new ones out. The big ships. They're beautiful. Bigger and faster than anything you and I ever rode.*

They're bringing Stargazer I *out for her tests,* he told her.

I know. My station has one of the drives. Station three is handling Stargazer I *now.*

He swallowed savagely, thinking of what the Super had said.

Oh, I wish I were one of them, Beth said.

His hand tensed on the glass and for a moment he thought it would shatter in his fingers. She hadn't said "on."

Were . . . were . . . I wish I were one of them.

Do you, he said. *That's fine.*

Oh, that's fine, starry eyes, he thought, *I love you and the ship and the*

stars and the sense of being . . . I am the ship . . . I am the station . . . I am anything but human . . .

What's wrong, Matt?

I'm going to get drunk.

There's a ship coming in. Signaling.

The bartender, he saw, was looking at him oddly. He realized that he had been nursing the same drink for the last fifteen minutes. He raised the glass and very deliberately drank and swallowed.

I've got to leave for a minute, she said.

Do that, he said.

Then: *I'm sorry, Beth. I didn't mean to take it out on you.*

I'll be back, she said.

And he was alone, wrapped in the isolation he had come so well to know. He wondered if such loneliness would eventually drive him to the change that . . . No, that would never be . . . The memory of what that had been like still haunted him.

He would rather have died in that distant cold Plutonian valley, he told himself, than to have ever come to this day. He thought of Jenks and Catherine and David and he envied them the final unthinking blackness that they shared. Even death was better than again facing that frightening loss of humanity he had once suffered.

He sat, looking out over the room, for the first time really noticing his surroundings. There were two tourists at the bar—a fat, weak-chinned man in a plaid, one-piece business suit and a woman, probably his wife, thin, thyroid-looking. They were talking animatedly, the man gesturing heatedly. He wondered what had brought them out so early in the morning.

It was funny, he thought, the image of the fat man, chattering like a nervous magpie, his pudgy hands making weaving motions in the air before him.

He saw that his glass was empty and he rose and went over to the bar. He found a stool and ordered another whiskey.

"I'll break him," the little man was saying in a high, thin voice. "Consolidation or no consolidation . . ."

"George," the woman said gratingly, "you shouldn't drink in the morning."

"You know very well that . . ."

"George, I want to go to the ruins today."

Matt . . . Matt . . .

"They've got the cutest pottery down in the shop on the corner. From the ruins. Those little dwarf figures . . . You know, the Martians."

Only she pronounced it "Mar-chans" with a spitting "ch" sound.

It's the big one, Matt. The Stargazer. *It's coming in. Maybe I'll see it warp. Beauti'ul . . . You should see the way the sides catch the light from the station's beacon. Like a big needle of pure silver.*

"Pardon me," the woman said, turning on the stool to him. "Do you know what time the tours to the ruins start?"

He tried to smile. He told her and she said, "Thank you."

"I suppose you people get tired of tourists," she said, large eyes questioning.

"Don't be silly," George said. "Got to be practical. Lots of money from tourists."

"That's true," he said.

Matt . . .

"Well," the woman said, "when you don't get away from Earth too often, you've got to crowd everything in."

Matt . . . Uneasy.

"That's true," he told the woman aloud and tried to sip his drink and say silently, *What's wrong?*

Matt, there's something wrong with the ship. The way Art described it that time . . . The field . . . flickering . . .

She started to fade.

Come back, he shouted silently.

Silence.

"I'm in the Manta business back home," George said.

"Manta?" He raised a mechanical eyebrow carefully.

"You know, the jet airfoil planes. That's our model name. Manta. 'Cause they look like a ray, the fish. The jets squirt a stream of air directly over the airfoil. They hover just like a 'copter. But speed? You've never seen that kind of speed from a 'copter."

"I've never seen one," he said.

Beth . . . Beth . . . , his silent voice shouted. For a moment he felt like shouting aloud, but an iron control stopped his voice.

"Oh, I tell you," George said, "we'll really be crowding the market in another five years. The air's getting too crowded for 'copters. They're not safe any longer. Why, the turbulence over Rochester is something . . ."

"We're from Rochester," the thyroid woman explained.

Matt, listen. It's the field generator, I think . . . The radiation must have jammed the pilot's synapses. I can't raise him. And there's no one else aboard. Only instruments.

How far from the station?

Half a mile.

My God, if the thing goes . . .

I go with it! He could feel the fear in her words.

"So we decided now was the time, before the new merger. George would never find the time after . . ."

Try to raise the pilot.

Matt . . . I'm afraid.

Try!

"Is something wrong?" The thyroid woman asked.

He shook his head.

"You need a drink," George said as he signaled the bartender.

Beth, what's the count?

Oh, Matt, I'm scared.

The count . . .

"Good whiskey," George said.

Getting higher . . . I can't raise the pilot.

"Lousiest whiskey on the ship coming in. Those things give me the creeps."

"George, shut up."

Beth, where are you?

What do you mean?

Where are you positioned? Central or to one side?

I'm five hundred yards off station center.

"I told you not to drink in the morning," the woman said.

Any secondary movers? Robot handlers?

Yes, I have to handle the drive units.

All right, tear your auxiliary power pile down.

But . . .

Take the bricks and stack them against the far wall of the station. You're shielded enough against their radiation. Then you'll have to rotate the bulk of the station between you and the ship.

But how . . . ?

Uranium's dense. It'll shield you from the radiation when the ship goes. And break orbit. Get as far away as possible.

I can't. The station's not powered.

If you don't . . .

I can't . . .

Then silence.

The woman and George looked at him expectantly. He raised his drink to his lips, marveling at the steadiness of his hands.

"I'm sorry," he said aloud. "I didn't catch what you said."

Beth, the drive units . . .

Yes?

Can you activate them?

They'll have to be jury-rigged in place. Quick welded.

How long?

Five, maybe ten minutes. But the field. It'll collapse the way the one on the ship's doing.

If you, of all people, can't handle it . . . Anyway, you'll have to chance it. Otherwise . . .

"I said," George said thickly, "have you ever ridden one of those robot ships?"

"Robot ships?"

"Oh, I know, they're not robots exactly."

"I've ridden one," he said. "After all, I wouldn't be on Mars if I hadn't."

George looked confused.

"George is a little dull sometimes," the woman said.

Beth . . .

Almost finished. The count's mounting.

Hurry . . .

If the field collapses . . .

Don't think about it.

"They give me the creeps," George said. "Like riding a ship that's haunted."

"The pilot is very much alive," he said. "And very human."

Matt, the pile bricks are in place. A few more minutes . . .

Hurry . . . hurry . . . hurry . . .

"George talks too much," the woman said.

"Oh, hell," George said, "it's just that . . . well, those things aren't actually human any more."

Matt, I'm ready . . . Scared . . .

Can you control your thrust?

With the remote control units. Just as if I were the Stargazer.

Her voice was chill . . . frightened.

All right, then . . .

Count's climbing fast . . . I'll . . . Matt! It's blinding . . . a ball of fire . . . it's . . .

Beth . . .

Silence.

"I don't give a damn," George told the woman petulantly. "A man's got a right to say what he feels."

Beth . . .

"George, will you shut up and let's go."

Beth . . .

He looked out at the bar and thought of flame blossoming in utter blackness and . . .

"They aren't men any more," he told George. "And perhaps not even quite human. But they're not machines."

Beth . . .

"George didn't mean . . ."

"I know," he said. "George is right in a way. But they've got something normal men will never have. They've found a part in the biggest dream that man has ever dared dream. And that takes courage . . . courage to be what they are. Not men and yet a part of the greatest thing that men have ever reached for."

Beth . . .

Silence.

George rose from his stool.

"Maybe," he said. "But . . . well . . ." He thrust out his hand. "We'll see you around," he said.

He winced when Freck's hand closed on his and, for a moment, sudden awareness shone in his eyes. He mumbled something in a confused voice and headed for the door.

Matt . . .

Beth, are you all right?

The woman stayed behind for a moment.

Yes, I'm all right, but the ship . . . the Stargazer . . .

Forget it.

But will there be another? Will they dare try again?

You're safe. That's all that counts.

The woman was saying, "George hardly ever sees past his own nose." She smiled, her thin lips embarrassed. "Maybe, that's why he married me."

Matt . . .

Just hang on. They'll get to you.

No, I don't need help. The acceleration just knocked me out for a minute. But don't you see?

See?

I have the drive installed. I'm a self-contained system.

No, you can't do that. Get it out of your mind.

Someone has to prove it can be done. Otherwise they'll never build another.

It'll take you years. You can't make it back.

"I knew right away," the woman was saying. "About you, I mean."

"I didn't mean to embarrass you," he said.

Beth, come back . . . Beth.

Going out . . . faster each minute. Matt, I'll be there before anyone else. The first. But you'll have to come after me. I won't have enough power in the station to come back.

"You didn't embarrass me," the thyroid woman said.

Her eyes were large and filmed.

"It's something new," she said, "to meet someone with an object in living."

Beth, come back.

Far out now . . . accelerating all the while . . . Come for me, Matt. I'll wait for you out there . . . circling Centaurus.

He stared at the woman by the bar, his eyes scarcely seeing her.

"You know," the woman said, "I think I could be very much in love with you."

"No," he told her. "No, you wouldn't like that."

"Perhaps," she said, "but you were right. In what you told George, I mean. It does take a lot of courage to be what you are."

Then she turned and followed her husband through the door. Before the door closed, she looked back longingly.

Don't worry, Beth. I'll come. As fast as I can.

And then he felt the sounds of the others, the worried sounds that filtered through the space blackness from the burned plains of Mercury to the nitrogen oceans of dark Pluto.

And he told them what she was doing.

For moments his inner hearing rustled with their wonder of it.

There was a oneness then. He knew what he must do, the next step he must take.

We're all with you, he told her, wondering if she could still hear his voice. *From now on, we always will be.*

And he reached out, feeling himself unite in a silent wish with all those other hundreds of minds, stretching in a brotherhood of metal across the endless spaces.

Stretching in a tight band of metal, a single organism reaching.

Reaching for the stars.

EPILOGUE

Matt, don't you see? she said.

It's all there, the other voices echoed.

And young Sommers' voice was saying: *Remember? To give yourself to something that's bigger . . . that can swallow you in its immensity . . .*

And isn't that what all men have wanted from the beginning? she asked.

And what about the rest of them, all the men sweeping out from the Earth? he asked.

Well, they too are finding their answer in knowing that their sons will inherit all space to the farthest limits, that while they die, the flesh that sprang from them will endure forever.

Humanity, he said, *a single organism investing the universe? I'd never thought of it that way.*

To find, she said, *what we have . . . eventually.*

While we are here to guard and watch, the voices said.

And he felt that these answers were enough, that his search for the stars had not been a mindless thing, that it was a part of some great pattern seeking fulfillment.

For him and Art and Beth, there was the union with all those others into something galaxy-spanning, something eternal.

And for man, fecund man, strewing his seed with an irresistible lavishness throughout the stars, the proud knowledge that he had become the inheritor of all creation.

It was enough to know that in each he had a share.

He could look out over the blackness of night to the Earth that they had left.

He felt himself merging with those other watchers, seeing the slim silver needles that his people built as they cleaved the blackness that would have been death for his race and was now the avenue to the far shores, to life.

And he wasn't sure that he had thought it.

Or Beth.

Or Art.

Or the swelling tide of other minds that said:

My sons, my sons.

The Science-Fiction Book Index

Compiled by EARL KEMP

The Index that follows covers in detail the fiction titles published in the field of imaginative literature, in the English language, from January 1, 1955 through December 31, 1955. It would not be quite fair for me to overlook the assistance of Kenneth Slater of England, who helped considerably with the British listings, both for 1954 and again for 1955.

You will notice two significant changes from last year's Index. (1) The Related, Associational and Non-Fiction list has been drastically curtailed to include only the most closely connected titles. (2) An asterisk, preceding the title of the book, denotes the original first edition publication of the title insofar as it is possible to establish.

The following key is applicable:

(B) — British
(C) — Canadian
BCE — Book Club Edition†
J — Juvenile
pa — Paper back
* — Original edition

† Sidgwick and Jackson is the British Science Fiction Book Club, corresponding to Doubleday here in the States.

List One

FICTION

Aarons, Edward S.
*Assignment to Disaster 25¢ *Gold Medal* pa
Anderson, Poul
Brain Wave 12s6d *Heinemann* (B)
*No World of Their Own 35¢ *Ace Double* pa
Ash, A.
*Conditioned for Space 9s6d *Ward, Lock* (B)
Asimov, Isaac
The Caves of Steel 35¢ *Signet* pa
The Currents of Space 9s6d *T. V. Boardman* (B)
*The End of Eternity $2.95 *Doubleday*

THE MAN WHO UPSET THE UNIVERSE /Foundation and Empire/ 35¢ *Ace Single* pa
*THE MARTIAN WAY AND OTHER STORIES $2.95 *Doubleday*
THE MARTIAN WAY AND OTHER STORIES $3.50 *Doubleday* (C)
THE MARTIAN WAY AND OTHER STORIES $1.15 *Doubleday* BCE
THE 1,000 YEAR PLAN /Foundation/ 35¢ *Ace Double* pa

Barr, Densil Neve
*THE MAN WITH ONLY ONE HEAD 9s6d *Rich and Cowan* (B)

Bell, Eric Temple (See John Taine, pseudonym)

Bennett, Alfred Gordon
THE DEMIGODS 12s6d *Rich and Cowan* (B) New Edition

Bennett, Margot
THE LONG WAY BACK $3.50 *Coward-McCann*

Bernard, Rafe
THE WHEEL IN THE SKY 6s *Ward, Lock* (B) New Edition
THE WHEEL IN THE SKY 1s6d *Ward, Lock* (B) pa

Bester, Alfred
THE DEMOLISHED MAN $1.15 *Doubleday* BCE

Bleiler, Everett F. & Dikty, T. E. eds
BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES Fourth Series (1953) 9s6d *Grayson & Grayson* (B)
*CATEGORY PHOENIX 9s6d *John Lane* (B)
*FRONTIERS IN SPACE (excerpts from The Best Science-Fiction Stories: 1951, 1952, 1953) 25¢ *Bantam* pa
THE YEAR'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION NOVELS Second Series 10s6d *Grayson & Grayson* (B)

Blish, James
*EARTHMAN, COME HOME $3.50 *Putnam*
EARTHMAN, COME HOME $3.75 *T. Allen* (C)
JACK OF EAGLES 2s *Nova* (B) pa

Boland, John
*WHITE AUGUST 10s6d *Michael Joseph* (B)

Boucher, Anthony
*FAR AND AWAY 35¢ *Ballantine* pa
FAR AND AWAY $2.00 *Ballantine*
———& ed
*THE BEST FROM FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION Fourth Series $3.50 *Doubleday*
THE BEST FROM FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION Fourth Series $1.15 *Doubleday* BCE

Bounds, Sidney J.
*THE MOON RAIDERS 8s6d *Foulsham* (B)

Brackett, Leigh (Mrs. Edmond Hamilton)
*THE BIG JUMP 35¢ *Ace Double* pa
THE GALACTIC BREED /The Starmen/ 35¢ *Ace Double* pa
*THE LONG TOMORROW $2.95 *Doubleday*
THE LONG TOMORROW $3.50 *Doubleday* (C)

Bradbury, Ray
FAHRENHEIT 451 4s5d *Sidgwick and Jackson* BCE (B)
THE ILLUSTRATED MAN 2s *Comet Books* (B) pa
*OCTOBER COUNTRY $3.50 *Ballantine*
*SWITCH ON THE NIGHT J $2.50 *Pantheon*

Briggs, Philip
*ESCAPE FROM GRAVITY J 6s *Lutterworth* (B)

Brown, Alec
*Angelo's Moon 9s6d *John Lane* (B)
Brown, Fredric
Angels and Spaceships $1.15 *Doubleday* BCE
Angels and Spaceships 10s6d *Victor Gollancz* (B)
The Lights in the Sky are Stars 25¢ *Bantam* pa
*Martians, Go Home $1.15 *Doubleday* BCE
Martians, Go Home $2.75 *Dutton*
Brown, Slater
*Spaceward Bound J $2.75 *Prentice-Hall*
Burke, Jonathan
*Alien Landscapes 8s6d *Museum Press* (B)
Deep Freeze 15s6d *Hamilton* (B) pa
*Hotel Cosmos 15s6d *Hamilton* (B) pa
*Revolt of the Humans 15s6d *Hamilton* (B) pa
Burroughs, Edgar Rice
The Mastermind of Mars 2s *W. H. Allen* (B) pa
Pellucidar 2s *W. H. Allen* (B) pa
Caldwell, Taylor
*Your Sins and Mine 25¢ *Gold Medal* pa
Campbell, John W., Jr.
*Who Goes There? 35¢ *Dell* pa
Capek, Karel
War with the Newts 35¢ *Bantam* pa
Capon, Paul
*Phobos, the Robot Planet J 10s6d *Heinemann* (B)
Carnell, John ed
*The Best from New Worlds 2s *T. V. Boardman* (B) pa
*Gateway to the Stars 9s6d *Museum Press* (B)
Carr, Charles
Colonists of Space 6s *Ward, Lock* (B) New Edition
Colonists of Space 15s6d *Ward, Lock* (B) pa
*Salamander War 9s6d *Ward, Lock* (B)
Carr, John Dickson
The Crooked Hinge 25¢ *Dell* pa
Chambers, Robert W.
The Maker of Moons $1.00 *Shroud*
Chilton, Charles
*Journey Into Space 9s6d *Herbert Jenkins* (B)
Journey Into Space $2.00 *Longmans* (C)
Christopher, John
*The Year of the Comet 12s6d *Michael Joseph* (B)
Clarke, Arthur C(harles)
Childhood's End 4s6d Sidgwick and Jackson BCE (B)
*Earthlight $2.75 *Ballantine*
Earthlight 35¢ *Ballantine* pa
Earthlight 10s6d *Frederick Muller* (B)
Clason, Clyde B.
*Ark of Venus J $2.00 *Knopf*
Clement, Hal (Pseudonym of Harry Clement Stubbs)
Mission of Gravity 9s6d *Robert Hale* (B)
Coblentz, Stanton A(rthur)
*Under the Triple Suns $3.00 *Fantasy Press*

Cockburn, Claud (See James Helvick, pseudonym)
Coggan, Blanche B.
*When God Quit $3.50 Greenwich
Coles, Manning
*Happy Returns $3.00 Doubleday
Collier, D. A.
*Kathy's Visit to Mars J $2.50 Exposition
Conklin, (Edward) Groff ed
*A Way Home by Theodore Sturgeon $3.50 Funk & Wagnalls
A Way Home by Theodore Sturgeon 27s6d Mayflower (B)
Invaders of Earth (excerpts from) 25¢ Pocket pa
*Operation Future 35¢ Pocket Perma pa
Possible Worlds of Science Fiction (excerpts from) 35¢ Berkley pa
Science Fiction Adventures in Dimension 10s6d Grayson & Grayson (B)
*Science Fiction Terror Tales 25¢ Pocket pa
Science Fiction Terror Tales $3.50 Gnome
Science-Fiction Thinking Machines (excerpts from) 25¢ Bantam pa
Conquest, Robert
*World of Difference 10s6d Ward, Lock (B)
Crane, Robert (Pseudonym of Frank Chester Robertson)
Hero's Walk 10s6d Cresset (B)
Hero's Walk $2.25 Ambassador (C)
Crispin, Edmund ed (Pseudonym of R. B. Montgomery)
*Best S-F Stories 15s Faber & Faber (B)
Cronin, Bernard (See Eric North, pseudonym)
da Vinci, Leonardo
The Deluge (edited by Robert Payne) 25¢ Lion pa
de Camp, L. Sprague
Lest Darkness Fall 12s6d Heinemann (B)
Lest Darkness Fall 35¢ Galaxy pa
de Rouen, Reed R.
*Split Image 11s6d Allan Wingate (B)
del Rey, Lester (See Philip St. John, pseudonym)
Derleth, August ed
Portals of Tomorrow $1.15 Doubleday BCE (Incomplete)
Dexter, William (Pseudonym of William Thomas Pritchard)
*Children of the Void 10s6d Peter Owen (B)
Dick, Philip K.
*A Handful of Darkness 10s6d Rich and Cowan (B)
*Solar Lottery 35¢ Ace Double pa
Dikty, T. E. ed
*The Best Science-Fiction Stories and Novels: 1955 $4.50 Frederick Fell
The Best Science-Fiction Stories and Novels: 1955 $4.75 McLeod (C)
———& Bleiler, Everett F. eds
Best Science Fiction Stories Fourth Series (1953) 9s6d Grayson & Grayson (B)
*Category Phoenix 9s6d John Lane (B)
*Frontiers in Space (excerpts from The Best Science Fiction Stories: 1951, 1952, 1953) 25¢ Bantam pa
The Year's Best Science Fiction Novels Second Series 10s6d Grayson & Grayson (B)

Dorman, G.
*Shattering Silence J 6s *Hutchinson* (B)
Du Maurier, Daphne
Kiss Me Again Stranger 35¢ *Pocket Cardinal* pa
Duff, Douglas V.
*The Sky Pirates J 5s *Blackie* (B)
Duko, Ivo and Kolda, Helena
*Martin and His Friend from Outer Space J $2.50 *Harper*
Duncan, David
*Beyond Eden $2.00 *Ballantine*
Beyond Eden 35¢ *Ballantine* pa
Dark Dominion 9s6d *Heinemann* (B)
Eliott, E. C.
*Kemlo and the Craters of the Moon J 5s *Nelson* (B)
*Kemlo and the Space Lanes J 5s *Nelson* (B)
*Tas and the Postal Rocket J 2s6d *Nelson* (B)
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*Reprieve from Paradise $3.00 *Gnome*
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*The Green Plantations 9s6d *Ward, Lock* (B)
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*Tyrant of Time $3.00 *Fantasy Press*
Evans, E. Everett
*Alien Minds $3.00 *Fantasy Press*
*The Planet Mappers J $2.50 *Dodd, Mead*
The Planet Mappers J $2.95 *Dodd, Mead* (C)
Falkner, Jon
*Overlords of Andromeda 1s6d *Hamilton* (B) pa
*Untrodden Streets of Time 1s6d *Hamilton* (B) pa
Fearn, John Russell (See Vargo Statten, pseudonym)
Felsen, Henry Gregor
*The Boy Who Discovered the Earth J $2.25 *Scribner's*
Finney, Jack
*The Body Snatchers 25¢ *Dell First* pa
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*Moonraker $2.75 *Macmillan*
Moonraker $2.10 *Clark, Irwin* (C)
Moonraker 10s6d *Cape* (B)
Frazee, Steve
The Sky Block 9s6d *John Lane* (B)
Gold, H(orace) L(eonard)
*The Old Die Rich And Other Science Fiction Stories $3.00 *Crown*
———& ed
The Galaxy Science Fiction Omnibus 13s6d *Grayson & Grayson* (B)
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*Lord of the Flies $3.50 *Coward-McCann*
Gordon, Rex (Pseudonym of S. B. Hough)
*Utopia 239 9s6d *Heinemann* (B)
Greene, Graham
Nineteen Stories 35¢ *Lion Library* pa

Gunn, James E(dward)
*This Fortress World $3.00 *Gnome*
———& Williamson, Jack
*Star Bridge $3.00 *Gnome*
Hallam, Atlantis
*Star Ship on Saddle Mountain J $2.50 *Macmillan*
Harness, Charles L. (Pseudonym of Leonard Lockhard)
The Paradox Men /Flight Into Yesterday/ 35¢ *Ace Double* pa
Harris, John Beynon (See John Wyndham, pseudonym)
Haynes, John Robert
*The Scream from Outer Space 8s6d *Rich and Cowan* (B)
Healy, Raymond J. ed
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———& McComas, J. Francis eds
More Adventures in Time and Space (excerpts from) 25¢ *Bantam* pa
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Assignment in Eternity 9s6d *Sidgwick and Jackson* (B)
Assignment in Eternity 4s6d *Sidgwick and Jackson* BCE (B)
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*Out Into Space J 9s6d *Sidgwick and Jackson* (B)
Helvick, James (Pseudonym of Claud Cockburn)
Overdraft on Glory $3.95 *Lippincott*
Holden, Richard Cort
*Snow Fury $3.00 *Dodd, Mead*
Snow Fury $1.15 *Doubleday* BCE
Holding, Elisabeth Sanxay
Miss Kelly J $2.50 *Morrow*
Hough, S. B. (See Rex Gordon, pseudonym)
Hughes, Riley
*The Hills Were Liars $3.25 *Bruce*
Huxley, Aldous
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Brave New World 2s6d *Penguin* (B) pa
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Jenkins, Will F. (See Murray Leinster, pseudonym)
Johns, W. E.
*Return to Mars J 7s6d *Hodder and Stoughton* (B)
Jones, Raymond F.
This Island Earth 9s6d *T. V. Boardman* (B)
Karp, David
Escape to Nowhere /One/ 35¢ *Lion Library* pa
Kersh, Gerald
*The Brighton Monster 7s6d *Heinemann* (B)
*Men Without Bones 12s6d *Heinemann* (B)
Klass, Philip (See William Tenn, pseudonym)
Knight, Damon
*Hell's Pavement 35¢ *Lion Library* pa
Koestler, Arthur
Darkness at Noon 35¢ *Signet* pa New Edition

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*Martin and His Friend from Outer Space J $2.50 *Harper*
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*Gladiator-at-Law $2.00 *Ballantine*
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Kuebler, Harold W. ed
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Kuttner, Henry and Moore, C. L. (Mrs. Henry Kuttner)
*No Boundaries $2.00 *Ballantine*
No Boundaries 35¢ *Ballantine* pa
Leinster, Murray (Pseudonym of Will F. Jenkins)
The Last Spaceship 35¢ *Galaxy* pa
*The Other Side of Here 35¢ *Ace Double* pa
Space Tug 25¢ *Pocket* pa
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Earthbound J 7s6d *Hutchinson* (B)
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Lin, Yutang
*Looking Beyond $4.95 *Prentice-Hall*
*The Unexpected Island 15s *Heinemann* (B)
Lockhard, Leonard (See Charles L. Harness, pseudonym)
Loomis, Noel
*City of Glass 35¢ *Columbia* pa
McCann, Edson
*Preferred Risk $2.75 *Simon & Schuster*
McComas, J. Francis & Healy, Raymond J. eds
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McInnes, Graham
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Morgan, D.

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Spencer, G. F.

*HEAVENS FOR ALL 7s6d *Mitre* (B)

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*THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON 2s *Dragon Books* (B) pa

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Stubbs, Harry Clement (See Hal Clement, pseudonym)

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*CAVIAR $2.00 *Ballantine*

CAVIAR 35¢ *Ballantine* pa

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Sutton, Lee

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MARTIN MANGUS: PLANET ROVER J $1.65 *Saunders* (C)

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Of All Possible Worlds $2.00 *Ballantine*
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*Space Cat Visits Venus J $2.00 *Scribner's*
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*The Return of the King 21s *Allen & Unwin* (B)
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*Alien Dust 9s6d *T. V. Boardman* (B)
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van Thal, Herbert ed
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Mission to the Stars /The Mixed Men/ 25¢ *Berkley* pa
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Vern, David (See David V. Reed, pseudonym)
Verne, Jules
20,000 Leagues Under the Sea J 2s6d *Collins* (B)
Vernon, Roger Lee
*The Space Frontiers 25¢ *Signet* pa
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Messiah 12s6d *Heinemann* (B)
Waldo, Edward Hamilton (See Theodore Sturgeon, pseudonym)
Wallace, F. L.
*Address: Centauri $3.00 *Gnome*
Ward, Arthur Sarsfield (See Sax Rohmer, pseudonym)
Water, Silas
*The Man with Absolute Motion 9s6d *Rich and Cowan* (B)
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*Star of Ill Omen 7s6d *Hutchinson* (B)
Star of Ill Omen 2s *Hutchinson* /Arrow Books/ (B) pa
*To the Devil—A Daughter 7s6d *Hutchinson* (B)
Wibberley, Leonard
*The Mouse That Roared $3.50 *Little, Brown*
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*Elevator to the Moon J $2.50 *Follett*
Elevator to the Moon J $3.25 *Follett Library*
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Wilding, Philip
Space-Flight Venus J $2.75 *Philosophical Library*
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*Valley Beyond Time 12s6d *Jonathan Cape* (B)
Valley Beyond Time $3.00 *St. Martin's*
Williams, Robert Moore
*The Chaos Fighters 25¢ *Ace Single* pa

*Conquest of the Space Sea 35¢ *Ace Double* pa
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*Dome Around America 35¢ *Ace Double* pa
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*Star Bridge $3.00 *Gnome*
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Wilson, Angus ed
*A.D. 2500 15s *Heinemann* (B)
Wilson, Richard
*The Girls from Planet 5 $2.00 *Ballantine*
The Girls from Planet 5 35¢ *Ballantine* pa
Wollheim, Donald A.
*The Secret of the Martian Moons J $2.00 *Winston*
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*Adventures on Other Planets 25¢ *Ace Single* pa
*Terror in the Modern Vein $3.95 *Hanover*
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*Re-Birth $2.00 *Ballantine*
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*The Green Man from Space J $2.50 *Dutton*

List Two

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Ames, Gerald and Wyler, Rose
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The Chemicals of Life J $2.50 *Abelard-Schuman*
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de Mauny, Erik, translator
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Wyler, Rose and Ames, Gerald
THE GOLDEN BOOK OF ASTRONOMY J $3.95 *Simon & Schuster*

EARL KEMP (1929–), born in Arkansas, migrated north at the age of 16. Residing in Chicago, he discovered the English language (still spoken with a non-Yankee accent), Lake Michigan (in which he almost froze, and pizza pie (which he consumes in vast quantities). He entered science-fiction by the Edgar Rice Burroughs route, liked the scenery and decided to stay. He is an editor of *Destiny*, one of the leading amateur magazines in the field, a past-president of the University of Chicago Science-Fiction Club and a devotee of progressive jazz. His interest in bibliography led him to take over the annual science-fiction magazine index and, later, to inaugurate his own annual science-fiction book index, both of which attained wide circulation when privately published. He is married and has three children.