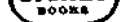


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bursts of anger tearing like knives through his being. Nor could it ever be clean anger; it was muddy stuff, and even at its full flood the knowledge was not hidden from him that he would soon be back again, apologizing to her, humiliating himself. Complain needed his woman.

This early in the waking period, several men were up; later, they would be dispersed about their business. A group of them sat playing Travel-Up. Complain walked over to them, hands in pockets, and stared moodily down between their ragged heads. The board stretched twice as far as the span of a man's outstretched arms. It was scattered with counters and symbols. One of the players leaned forward and moved a pair of his blocks.

"An outflank on Five," he said, with grim triumph, looking up and winking at Complain conspiratorially.

Complain turned away indifferently. For long periods of his life, this game had exerted an almost uncanny attraction on him. He had played it till his adolescent limbs cracked from squatting and his eyes could hardly focus on the silver tokens. On others, too, nearly all the Greene tribe, Travel-Up cast its spell; it gave them a sense of spaciousness and power lacking in their lives. Now Complain was free of the spell, and missed its touch. To be absorbed in anything again would be good.

He ambled moodily down the clearing, hardly noticing the doors on either hand. Instead, he darted his eyes about among the passers-by, as if seeking a signal. He saw Wantage hurrying along to the barricades, instinctively keeping the deformed left side of his face away from others' eyes. Wantage never played at the long board: he could not tolerate people on both sides of him. Why had the council spared him as a child? Many deformities were born in the Greene tribe, and only the knife awaited them. As boys, they had called Wantage "Slotface," and tormented him; but he

hunter, was not the equal of any other man. It was in the Teaching. No man is inferior until he feels the need to show respect for another."

His spirits now restored, he caught up with Wantage, clapping his hand on the latter's left shoulder. Spinning in the other direction, Wantage presented a short fencing stick to Complain's stomach. He had an economical way of moving, like a man closely surrounded by naked blades. His point lodged neatly against Complain's navel.

"Easy now, my pretty one. Is that how you always greet a friend?" Complain asked, turning the point of the stick away.

"I thought—Expansion, hunter. Why are you not out after meat?" Wantage asked, sliding his eyes away from Complain.

"Because I am walking down to the barricades with you. Besides, my pot is full and my dues paid: I have no need of meat."

They walked in silence, Complain attempting to get on the other's left side, the other eluding his efforts. Complain was careful not to try him too far, in case Wantage fell on him. Violence and death were pandemic in Quarters, forming a natural balance to the high birth rate, but nobody cheerfully dies for the sake of symmetry.

Near the barricades, the corridor was crowded; Wantage, muttering that he had cleaning work to do, slipped away. He walked close to the wall, narrowly upright, with a sort of bitter dignity in his step.

The leading barricade was a wooden partition with a gate in it which entirely blocked the corridor. Two guards were posted there continually. There, Quarters ended and the mazes of ponc tangle began. But the barrier was a temporary structure, for the position itself was subject to change.

The Greene tribe was seminomadic, forced by its inability to maintain adequate crops or live food to move along on to new ground frequently. This was accomplished by thrusting forward the leading barricade and

lower tendons biting deep. As it was chopped out, other men with spades cleared the humus into sacks; here the humus was particularly deep, almost two feet of it: evidence that these were unexplored parts, across which no other tribe had ever worked. The filled sacks were carted back to Quarters, where they would be emptied to provide new fields in new rooms.

Another body of men were also at work before the barricade, and these Complain watched with especial interest. They were of a more exalted rank than the others present; they were guards, recruited only from the hunters, and the possibility existed that one day, through fortune or favor, Complain might rise to that enviable class.

As the almost solid wall of tangle was bitten back, doors were revealed, presenting black faces to the onlookers. The rooms behind these doors would yield mysteries: a thousand strange articles, useful, useless, or meaningless, which had once been the property of the vanished race of Giants. The duty of the guards was to break open these ancient tombs and appropriate whatever lay within for the good of the tribe, meaning themselves. In due time the loot would be distributed or destroyed, depending on the whim of the council. Much that emerged was declared to be dangerous, and was burned.

The business of opening these doors was not without its hazards, imaginary if not real. Rumor had it that other small tribes, also struggling for existence in the tangle warrens, had silently vanished away after opening such doors.

Complain by now was not the only one caught by the perennial fascination of watching people work. Several women, each with an ample quota of children, stood by the barricade, getting in the way of the procession of humus and ponc bearers. To the constant small whine of flies, from which Quarters was never free, was added the chatter of small

indulgent, then hands idly raiming away the flies.

"There has to be light for the ponies to grow, just as you could not live in the dark," came the answer to the boy. Complain saw the man who spoke was Bob Fermour, a slow fellow fit only for laboring in the fieldrooms. He was genial—rather more so than the Teaching entirely countenanced—and consequently popular with the children. Complain recalled that Fermour was reputed to be a storyteller, and felt suddenly eager to be diverted. Without his anger he was empty.

"What was there before the ponies were there?" a little girl demanded. In their unpracticed way, the children were trying to start Fermour on a story.

"Tell 'em the tale about the world, Bob!" one of the mothers advised. Fermour glanced quizzically up at Complain.

"Don't mind me," Complain said. "Theories are less than flies to me." The powers of the tribe discouraged theorizing, or any sort of thought not on severely practical lines; hence Fermour's hesitation.

"Well, this is all guesswork, because we don't have any records of what happened in the world before the Greene tribe began," Fermour said. "Or if we do find records, they don't make much sense." He glanced sharply at the adults in his audience before adding quickly, "Because there are more important things to do than puzzle over old legends."

"What is the tale about the world, Bob? Is it exciting?" a boy asked impatiently.

Fermour smoothed the boy's hair back from his eyes and said earnestly, "It is the most exciting tale that could possibly be, because it concerns all of us, and how we live. Now the world is a wonderful place. It is constructed of layers and layers, like this one, and these layers do not end, because they eventually turn a circle on to themselves. So you

The children seemed impressed, but one of the women laughed and said, "Fat lot of good it'll do them, guessing about something nobody knows exists."

Mentally, Complain agreed with her as he walked away. There were a lot of these theories circulating now, all differing, all unsettling, none encouraged by authority. He wondered if it would improve his standing to denounce Fermour; but unfortunately everybody ignored Fermour: he was too slow. Only last week, he had been publicly stroked for sloth in the fieldrooms.

Complain's more immediate problem was, should he go hunting? A memory of how often recently he had walked restlessly like this, to the barricade and back, caught him unawares. He clenched his fists. Time passing, opportunities lacking, and always something missing, missing. Again—as he had done since a child—Complain whirled furiously around his brain, searching for a factor which promised to be there and was not, ever. Dimly, he felt he was preparing himself—but quite involuntarily—for a crisis. It was like a fever brewing, but this would be worse than a fever.

He broke into a run. His hair, long and richly black, flopped over his wide eyes. His expression became disturbed. Usually his young face showed strong and agreeable lines under a slight plumpness. The line of jaw was true, the mouth in repose heroic. Yet over the countenance as a whole worked a wasting bitterness; and this desolation was a look common to almost the whole tribe. It was a wise part of the Teaching which said that one man's eyes should not meet another's directly.

Complain ran almost blindly, sweat bursting out on his forehead. Sleep or wake, it was perpetually warm in Quarters, and sweat started easily. Nobody he passed regarded him with interest: much senseless running

subside slowly, hers were there, then gone.

"Gwenny . . . Gwenny, come on," he coaxed.

Her manner changed abruptly. The haggard watchfulness of her face was submerged in dreaminess.

"Will you take me hunting with you?"

"Yes," he said. "Anything you say."

What Gwenny said or did not say, however, had small effect on the irresistible roll of events. Two girls, Ansa and Daise, remote relations by marriage of Gwenny's, arrived breathless to say that her father, Ozbert Bergass, had taken a turn for the worse and was asking for her. He had fallen ill with the trailing rot a sleep-wake ago. It was thought he would not last: people who fell ill in Quarters seldom lasted long.

"I must go to him," Gwenny said. The independence children had to maintain of their parents was relaxed at times of crisis; the law permitted visiting of sick beds.

"He was a great man in the tribe," Complain said solemnly. Ozbert Bergass had been senior guide for many sleep-wakes, and his loss would be felt. All the same, Complain did not offer to go and see his father-in-law; sentiment was one of the weaknesses the Greene tribe strove to eradicate. Instead, when Gwenny had gone, he went down to the market to see Ern Roffery the Valuer, to ask the current price of meat.

On his way, he passed the pens. They were fuller of animals than ever before, domesticated animals fitter and more tender than the wild ones the hunters caught. Roy Complain was no thinker, and there seemed to him a paradox here he could not explain to himself. Never before had the tribe been so prosperous or its farms so thriving; the lowest laborer tasted meat once in a cycle of four sleep-wakes. Yet Complain himself was less prosperous than formerly. He hunted more, but found less and received

The Valuer preened his great moustaches and burst out laughing. Several other men idling nearby laughed too. One of them, a burly, stinking fellow called Cheap, bore a pile of round cans he was hoping to exchange in the market. With a savage kick, Complain sent the cans flying. Roaring with rage, Cheap scrambled to retrieve them, fighting to get them back from others already snatching them up. At this Roffery laughed the louder, but the tide of his humor had changed, and was no longer against Complain.

"You'd be worse off living in Forwards," he said consolingly. "They are a people of miracles there. Create beasts for eating from their breath, catching them in the air, they do. They don't need hunters at all." He slammed violently at a fly settling on his neck. "And they have vanquished the curse of flying insects."

"Rubbish!" said an old man standing nearby.

"Don't contradict me, Eff," the Valuer said. "Not if you value your dotage higher than droppings."

"So it is rubbish," Complain said. "Who would be fool enough to imagine a place without flies?"

"I can imagine a place without Complains," roared Cheap, who had now recovered his cans and stood ferociously by Complain's shoulder. They faced each other now, poised for trouble.

"Give it to him," the Valuer called to Cheap. "Show him I want no hunters interrupting my business."

"Since when was a scavenger of tins of more merit in Quarters than a hunter?" the old man called Eff asked generally. "I warn you, a bad time's coming to this tribe. I'm only thankful I won't be here to see it."

Growls of derision for the old man and dislike for his sentiments arose on all sides. Suddenly tired of the company, Complain edged away. He

His breathless voice broke on, dying up perhaps before some old megalomaniac vision of massacre. Complains moved away from him almost unnoticed: he saw Gwenny approaching across the clearing.

"Your father?" he inquired.

She made a faint gesture with one hand, indicative of nothing.

"You know the trailing rot," she said tonelessly. "He will be making the Long Journey before another sleep-wake is spent."

"In the midst of life we are in death," he said solemnly: Bergass was a man of honor.

"And the Long Journey has always begun," she replied, finishing the quotation from the Litany for him. "There is no more to be done.

Meanwhile, I have my father's heart and your promise of a hunting. Let us go now, Roy. Take me into the ponics with you—please."

"Running-meat's down to six loaves a carcass," he told her. "It's not worth going, Gwenny."

"You can buy a lot with a loaf. A pot for my father's skull, for instance."

"That's the duty of your step-mother."

"I want to come with you hunting."

He knew that note in her voice. Turning angrily on his heel, he made for the leading barricade without another word. Gwenny followed demurely.

companionway, pushing through the crowded stalks rather than cutting them, so that their trail should be less obvious. At the top he halted, Gwenny peering eagerly, anxiously over his shoulder.

The individual ponies pressed up toward the light in bursts of short-lived energy, clustering overhead. The general illumination was consequently of a sickly kind, rather better for imagining things than actually seeing them. Added to this were the flies and clouds of tiny midges that drifted among the foliage like smoke: vision was limited and hallucinatory. But there was no doubt a man stood watching them, a man with beady eyes and chalk-white forehead.

He was three paces ahead of them. He stood alertly. His great torso was bare and he wore only shorts. He seemed to be looking at a point a little to their left. Yet so uncertain was the light that the harder one peered the harder it was to be sure of anything, except that the man was there. And then he was not there.

"Was it a ghost?" Gwenny hissed.

Slipping his dazer into his hand, Complain pressed forward. He could almost persuade himself he had been tricked by a pattern of shadow, so silently had the watcher vanished. Now there remained no sign of him but trampled seedlings where he had stood.

"Don't let's go on," Gwenny whispered nervously. "Suppose it was a Forwards man—or an Outsider."

"Don't be silly," he said. "You know there are wild men who have run amok and live solitary in the tangles. He will not harm us. If he had wanted to shoot us, he would have done so then."

All the same, his skin crawled uneasily to think that even now this stray might be planning their deaths as surely and invisibly as if he had been a disease.

tribe had come up from another level and was slowly approaching the Greene hunting preserves.

"We'll report this when we get back," Complain said, and led her the other way.

He worked easily along, counting the turns as they went, so as not to get lost. When a low archway appeared to their left, they moved through it, picking up a pig trail. This was the area known as Sternstairs, where a great hill led down to lower levels. A crashing sounded from over the brink of the slope, followed by an unmistakable squealing. Pig!

Motioning Gwenny to stay where she was at the top of the hill, Complain, dexterously sliding his bow from his shoulder and fitting an arrow to it, began the descent. His hunter's blood was up, all worries forgotten, and he moved like a wraith. Gwenny's eye sped him an unnoticed message of encouragement.

With room for once to reach something like their full stature, the ponics on the lower level had grown up into thin trees, arching overhead. Complain slipped to the brink of the drop, peering down through the tall ponics. An animal moved down there, rooting contentedly; he could see no litter, although the squealing had sounded like the cries of small creatures.

As he worked cautiously down the slope, also overwhelmed with the ubiquitous tangle, he felt a momentary pang for the life he was about to take. A pig's life! He squashed the pang at once; the Teaching did not approve of softness.

There were three piglets besides the sow. Two were black and one brown; shaggy, long-legged creatures like wolves, with prehensile noses and scoop jaws. The sow obligingly turned a broad flank for the readying arrow. She raised her head suspiciously and probed with her little eye through the poles around her.

corridor. It twanged past Complain's ear. He dropped instantly, avoiding a second arrow, and groveled quickly back along the trail. Being dead helped nobody.

Silence now, the usual crumbling noise of insane plant growth. Being *alive* helped nobody either. The facts hit him one by one and then all together. He had lost the pigs; he had lost Gwenny; he would have to face the council and explain why they were now a woman short. Shock for a moment obscured the salient fact: he had lost Gwenny. Complain did not love her, often he hated her; but she was his, necessary.

Comfortingly, anger boiled up in his mind, drowning the other emotions. Anger! This was the salve the Teaching taught. Wrenching up handfuls of root-bound soil, he pelted them from him, distorting his face, working up the anger, creaming it up like batter in a bowl. Mad, mad, mad . . . he flung himself flat, beating the ground, cursing and writhing. But always quietly.

At last the fit worked itself off, and he was left empty. For a long time he just sat there, head in hand, his brain washed as bare as tidal mud. Now he must get up and go back to Quarters. He had to report. In his head his weary thoughts ran.

I could sit here forever. The breeze so slight, never changing its temperature, the light only seldom dark. The ponics rearing up and failing, decaying around me. I should come to no harm but death. . . ,

Only if I stay alive can I find the something missed, the big something. Perhaps now I'll never find it, or Gwenny could have found it for me—no she couldn't: she was a substitute for it, admit it. Perhaps it does not exist. But when something so big has nonexistence, that in itself is existence. A hole. A wall. As the priest says, there's been a calamity.

Get up, you weak fool.

But now the drab and the old in costume were as bright as the newest.

The lowliest laborer sported flaring green rags!

"What's happening here?" Complain asked a passing man.

"Expansion to your ego, friend. The guards found a cache of dye earlier. Get yourself a soak! There's going to be a celebration."

Further on, a crowd was gathered, chattering excitedly. A series of stoves were ranged along the deck; over them, like so many witches' cauldrons, boiled the largest utensils available. Yellow, scarlet, pink, mauve, black, blue, green, and copper, the separate liquids boiled, bubbled, and steamed, and around them churned the people, dipping one garment here, another there. Through the thick steam their unusual animation sounded shrilly.

This was not the only use to which the dye was being put. Once it had been decreed that the dye was no use to the council, the guards had thrown the bags out for anyone to have. Many bags had been slit open and their contents thrown against walls or floors. Now the whole village was decorated with round bursts or slashes of bright color.

Dancing had started. In still wet clothes, trailing rainbows which merged into brown puddles, women and men joined hands and began to whirl about the open spaces. A hunter jumped on to a box, beginning to sing. A woman in a yellow robe leaped up with him, clapping her hands. Another rattled a tambourine. More and more joined in the throng, singing, stamping around the cauldrons, breathlessly but gladly. They were drunk on color; most of them had hardly known it before.

Some of the guards, aloof at first, joined in too, unable to resist the excitement in the humid air. The men were pouring in from the fieldrooms, sneaking back from the various barricades, eager for their share of pleasure.

them. The Greene tribe is master of everything this side of Deadways.

As Complain gave his story, the lieutenant grew gradually more angry. His limbs began to shake; his eyes filled with tears; his mouth distorted till his chin was glistening with saliva. The desk began to rock in unison with his fury. As he rocked, he growled, and under the shaggy white hair his skin turned a pale maroon. Despite his fear, Complain had to admit it was a brilliant performance.

Its climax came when the lieutenant, vibrating like a top with the wrath pouring from him, fell suddenly to the ground and lay still. At once Zilliac and his fellow, Patcht, stood over the body, dazers at the ready, faces twitching with reciprocal anger.

Slowly, very slowly and tremblingly, the lieutenant climbed back on to his chair, exhausted by the necessary ritual. "He'll kill himself some day, doing that," Complain told himself. The thought warmed him a little.

"Now to decide your punishments under the law," the old man said, in a husk of a voice. He glanced around the room in a helpless fashion. "You know the laws, young man. My grandfather formed them when he formed the tribe. They are next to the Teaching in importance in our ... in our lives. What is all that row outside? Yes, he was a great man, my grandfather. I remember on the day he died he sent for me. ..."

Fear glands were working copiously in Complain, but in a sudden moment of detachment he saw the four of them, each pursuing an elusive thread in his own being, conscious of the others only as interpretations or manifestations of his own fears. They were isolated, and every man's hand was against his neighbor.

"What shall the sentence be?" Zilliac growled, cutting into the lieutenant's reminiscences.

"Oh, ah, let me see. You are already punished by losing your

several groups jigged rapturously to the sound of strunged instruments. The noise was incessant, and in the frenetic movements of the dancers—heads jerking, fingers twitching—an onlooker might have found cause for alarm. But there were few non-participants. The tall, saturnine doctor, Lindsey, was one; Fermour was another, too slow for this whirl; Wantage was another, pressing his maimed face away from the throng; the public stroker was another. The latter had his appointments to keep, and at the proper time appeared before Complain with a guard escort. The clothes were stripped from his back and the first installment of his punishment was administered.

A crowd of eyes usually watched these events. For once there was something better happening; Complain suffered almost privately. Tomorrow he might expect more attention.

Pulling his shirt down over his wounds, he went back to his compartment. He entered, and found Marapper, the priest, awaiting him.

He began to haul his shirt over his shoulders, taking his time, tugging a little. The pain, as the fibers of the garment tugged out of the wounds, was almost pleasant. It would be worse next sleep-wake. Finally he flung the garment to the floor and spat at it. Irritation stirred within him to see how indifferently the priest had watched his struggle.

"Not dancing, Marapper?" he asked tartly.

"My duties are with the mind, not the senses," the other said piously. "Besides, I know better ways to oblivion."

"Such as being snatched away into the tangles, I suppose?"

"It pleases me to hear you taking your own part so sharply, my friend; that is how the Teaching would have it. I feared to find you in the doldrums: but happily it seems my comfort is not needed."

Complain looked down at the face of the priest, avoiding the bland eyes. It was not a handsome face. Indeed, at this moment it hardly seemed a face at all, but a totem roughly molded in lard, a monument perhaps to the virtues by which man survived: cunning, greed, self-seeking. Unable to help himself, Complain warmed to the man; here was someone he knew and could consequently deal with.

"May my neuroses not offend, father," he said. "You know I have lost my woman, and my life feels wasted.

Whatever I have laid claim to—and that's little enough—has gone from me, or what remains will be forcibly taken. The guards will come, the guards who have already whipped and will whip me again tomorrow, and turn me out of here to live with the single men and boys. No rewards for my hunting, or comfort for my distress! The laws of this tribe are too harsh, priest—the Teaching itself is cruel cant—the whole stifling world nothing but a seed of suffering. Why should it be so? Why should there

That theory again! Complains said sullenly. "What if the world is called ship, or ship the world, it makes no difference to us."

For some reason, the ship theory, known though generally disregarded in Quarters, upset and frightened him. He tightened his mouth and said, "I wish to sleep now, father. Sleep at least brings comfort. You bring only riddles. Sometimes I see you in my sleep, you know; you are always telling me something I ought to understand, but somehow I never hear a word."

"And not only in your dreams," said the priest pleasantly, turning away. "I had something important to ask you, but it must wait. I shall return tomorrow, and hope to find you less at the mercy of your adrenalin," he added, and with that was gone.

For a long while Complain stared at the closed door, not hearing the sounds of revelry outside. Then, wearily, he climbed up on the empty bed.

Sleep did not come. His mind ran over the endless quarrels he and Gwenny had suffered in this room—the search for a more cruel and crushing remark, the futility of their armistices. Suddenly, tracing over the events which led to Gwenny's abduction, he recalled the ghostly figure that had faded into the ponics at their approach. He sat up in bed, uneasy at something more than the uncanny expertise with which the figure had vanished. Outside his door, all was now quiet. The race of his thoughts must have gone on for longer than he had imagined; the dance was done, the dancers overcome by sleep. Only he with his consciousness pierced the tomblike veil that hung over the corridors of Quarters. If he opened his door now, he might hear the distant, never-ending rustle of ponic growth.

But nervousness made the thought of opening his door dreadful to him. Complain recalled in a rush the legends of strange beings which were frequently told in Quarters.

There were, first, the mysterious peoples of Forwards. Forwards

had hearts and lungs. The Outsiders invariably escaped detection—but everyone knew they were there: the very fact that witch-hunts took place proved it.

They might be gathering outside the door now, as menacingly as that silent figure had faded into the ponics.

This was the simple mythology of the Greene tribe, and it did not vary radically from the hierarchy of hobgoblins sustained by the other tribes moving slowly through that region known as Deadways. Part of it, yet entirely a separate species, were the Giants. The Forwarders, the mutants, and the Outsiders were all known to exist; occasionally a mutant would be dragged in living from the tangles and made to dance before the people until, tiring of him, they despatched him on the Long Journey; and many warriors would swear they had fought solitary duels with Forwarders and Outsiders; but there was in these three orders of beings an elusive quality. During wakes, in company, it was easy to discount them.

The Giants could not be discounted. They were real. Once everything had belonged to them, the world had been theirs, some even claimed that men were descended from them. Their trophies lay everywhere and their greatness was plain. If ever they returned, there would be no resisting.

In the midst of his anxiety, Complain recalled something else: the sound of crying he and Gwenny had heard. The two separate facts slipped smoothly together. The man—the approaching tribe. The man had not been an Outsider, or anything so mysterious. He had merely been a flesh and blood hunter from the other tribe. As simple, as obvious as that. . . .

Complain lay back, relaxing. His stupidity had been gently nuzzled out of the way by a little deduction. Although slightly appalled to think how the obvious had eluded him, he was nevertheless proud to consider this new lucidity. He never *rationated* enough. Everything he did was too

The revels were now over. The actors, not bothering to return to their apartments, lay where sleep had found them, among the bright ruins of their gaiety. Only children called as usual, prodding somnolent mothers into action. Quarters looked like a broad battlefield; but the slain had not bled, and suffering was not yet finished for them.

A figure was approaching. Not without misgiving, Complain recognized his mother. The law in Quarters, not rigorously enforced, was that a child should cease to communicate with his brothers and sisters when he was hip high, and with his mother when he was waist high. But Myra was a garrulous woman; what her waist proscribed, her tongue discarded, and she talked firmly to her many children whenever possible.

"Greetings, Mother," Complain grunted. "Expansion to your ego."

"At your expense, Roy."

"Look, my back hurts: I don't feel like talking."

"Of course it hurts, Roy; you mustn't expect it not to. What it'll be like when you've finished your punishment, I shudder to think. I've got some fat I'll rub on it for you, and that'll ease the pores. Remember, Roy, things won't always be bad. Don't let it get you down."

"Things are always bad, Mother, what's there to live for?"

"You shouldn't talk like that. I know what the Teaching says about not hiding any bitterness within you, but you don't look at things the way I do. Life is a mystery. The mere fact of being alive-----"

"I know all that."

Myra looked hard at his angry face, and the lines on hers rearranged themselves into an expression of softness.

"When I want to comfort myself," she said, "I think of a great stretch of blackness, sweeping off forever in all directions. And in this blackness, a host of little lanterns begin to burn. Those lanterns are our lives,

mother, my brother Gregg who left the tribe and went alone into the tangles-----"

"You still think of him?" the old lady asked eagerly. "Gregg was a good one, Roy; he'd have made a guard if he had stayed."

"Do you think he might still be alive?"

She shook her head decisively. "In the tangles? You may be certain the Outsiders got him. A great pity . . . Gregg would have made a good guard. I've always said so."

Complain was about to go when she said sharply, "Old Ozbart Bergass still breathes. They tell me he calls for his daughter Gwenny. It is your duty to go to him."

She spoke, for once, undeniable truth. And for once duty was colored with pleasure; Bergass was a tribal hero.

The rooms in which Bergass had his household were now far in the rear of Quarters. Once, these rooms had been at the leading barricade. As the tribe inched its way forward, they had gradually slipped back; when they had been in the midst of the tribe, Ozbart Bergass had been at the height of his power. Now, in his old age, his rooms lay far to the rear of anyone else's. The last barrier, the barricade between humanity and Deadways, stood just beyond his door.

In contrast with the temporary cheerfulness of the rest of Quarters, Bergass's passage looked sinister and chill. Long ago, probably in the time of the Giants, some sort of an explosion had taken place. The walls were blackened for some distance, and overhead a hole bigger than a man's length gaped. Here, outside the old guide's doors, no lights burned.

The continued advance of the tribe had added to this neglect, for a few ponies, seeding themselves determinedly across the rear barrier, grew in shaggy, stunted procession along the dirty deck, thigh high only.

giving the withered body the aspect of a corpse pierced by decaying sticks. ". . . and so the ship was lost, and man was lost, and the very losing was lost," the old man said huskily, fixing blank eyes on Complain. "And I have climbed all among the wreckage and I know, and I say that the longer time goes on the less chance we have of finding ourselves again. Yon fool women do not understand, you do not care, but I've told Gwenny many a time he does wrong by his tribe. 'You're doing wrong,' I've told him, 'destroying everything you come across just because it is not necessary to you. These books you burn, these rolls of film,' I said, 'you destroy them because you think someone might use them against you. But they hold secrets we ought to know,' I said, 'and you're a fool; we ought to be piecing things together, not destroying them. I tell you I've traveled more decks than you know exist,' I said . . . what do you want, sir?"

Since this interruption in the monologue seemed to be addressed to him, Complain answered that he came to be of service if possible.

"Service?" Bergass asked. "I've always fended for myself. And my father before me. My father was the greatest guide of them all. Do you know what has made us the tribe we are? I'll tell you. My father was out searching with me when I was a youngster and he found what the Giants used to call an armory. Yes, chambers full of dazers—full of 'em! But for that discovery the Greenes would not be what we are; we would have died out by now. Yes, I could take you to the armory now; if you dare to come. Away beyond the center of Deadways, where feet turn into hands and the floor moves away from you and you swim in the air like an insect-----"

"He's babbling now," Complain thought. Pointless to tell him about Gwenny while he was jabbering about feet turning into hands. But the old guide stopped suddenly and said, "How did you get here, Roy Complain? Give me some more broth, my stomach's dry as wood."

doctor away. Old Greene, he won't come, he's afraid of the rot. Besides, he's getting as old as I am; Zilliac'll knock him off one of these fine sleep-wakes and take control himself. . . . Now there's a man . . ."

Seeing Bergass was wandering again, Complain said desperately, "Can I get you the priest?"

"The priest? Who, Henry Marapper? Come nearer, and I'll tell something, just between us two. A secret. Never told anyone else. Easy. . . Henry Marapper's a son of mine. Yes! I don't believe in his bag of lies any more than I believe-----"

He interrupted himself with a fit of croaking which for a moment Complain took for gasps of pain; then he realized it was laughter, punctuated by the words, "My son!" There was no point in staying. With a curt word to one of the women, he got up, suddenly disgusted, leaving Bergass shaking so violently that his stomach growths clapped together. The other women stood about disinterestedly, hands on hips or making the perpetual fanning gesture against the flies.

Back in the dark corridor, he leaned for a time against a wall, sighing with relief. He had done nothing, had not even broken the news of Gwenny's death that he had come to tell Bergass, yet something had happened inside him. It was as if a great weight were rolling forward in his brain; it brought pain, but it enabled him to see more clearly. From it, he instinctively knew, some sort of climax would crystallize.

It had been overpoweringly hot in Bergass's room; Complain was dripping. From the corridor he could hear voices. Suddenly a vision of Quarters as it really was came into his mind. It was a great cavern, filled exhaustingly with the twitter of many voices. Nowhere any real action, only voices, dying voices.

merit, the greater part supine. Their barbaric outbreaks of festivity were always succeeded by this mass quiescence. They were expended but, more than that, they were unable to plunge once more into the rigors of routine. Inertia overcame the whole tribe. Despondence lay over them like sheets, and outside the barricades the ponc tangle made inroads on the clearings. Only hunger would get them to their feet again.

"You could murder the whole tribe without a hand being raised against you," Wantage said, something like inspiration showing on the right side of his face.

"Why don't you then?" Complain said jeeringly. "It's in the Litany, you know: an evil desire suppressed multiplies itself and devours the mind it feeds in."

Instantly, he was seized by the wrist and a sharp blade whisked horizontally to within an inch of his throat. Glaring into his face was a terrible visage, one half creased in fury, the other creased permanently into a meaningless smile; a large gray eye stared detachedly beyond them, absorbed in its own private vision.

Wantage snarled. Then he twitched his face away, dropping his knife hand, turning his back, anger fading to mortification as he recalled his deformity.

"I'm sorry." Complain regretted the remark as he uttered it, but the other did not turn around again.

Slowly, Complain also moved on, nerves jangled by the encounter. He had run into Wantage on his return from the tangles, where he had been investigating the approaching tribe. If they made contact with the Greene tribe, which was by no means certain, it would not be for some while; the first trouble would be clashes between rival hunters. That might mean death; certainly it would mean release from

Expansion, son," said the priest, languidly making the fage sign.
"You look bitter; are you?"

"Very bitter, father. Only killing could ease it." Through his words, try as he would to say something unexpected, Complain's sense of re-enacting a scene persisted.

"There are more things than killing. Things you do not dream of."

"Don't hand me that. You'll be telling me next that life is a mystery and rambling on like my mother. I feel I *need* to kill someone."

"You shall, you shall," the priest soothed. "And it is good you should feel so. Never grow resigned, my son; that way is death for us all. We are being punished here for some wrong our forefathers committed. We are all maimed! We are all blind—we thrust out in wrong directions . . ."

Complain had climbed wearily on to his bunk. The illusion of reliving the scene had gone. Now he wanted only to sleep. Tomorrow he would be evicted from his single room and stroked; now he wanted only to sleep. But the priest had stopped talking. Complain glanced up and found Marapper leaning on his bunk, gazing at him. Their eyes met for a moment, before Complain pulled his hurriedly away.

One of the strongest taboos in their society was directed against one man's looking at another straight in the eyes; honest, well-intentioned men gave each other only side glances. Complain stuck out his lower lip truculently.

"What the hem do you want with me, Marapper?" he exploded.

"You didn't get your six strokes, did you?"

"What's that to you, priest?"

"A priest knows no self-seeking. I ask for your good; besides, I have a personal interest in your answer."

"No, I wasn't beaten. They're all flat asleep, as you know—even the

For the first time, he realized Malappet was wrestling with a crisis in his own life, and wondered momentarily if it had any connection with the fact of Bergass's illness.

"Look at me, Roy. Answer me."

"Why are you speaking to me like this?" He was sitting up now, struck by the urgency in the priest's voice.

"I must know what you are made of."

"You know what the Litany tells us: we are the sons of cowards, our days are passed in fear."

"This you believe?" the priest asked.

"Naturally. It is the Teaching."

"I need your aid, Roy. Would you follow where I led you—even out of Quarters, into Deadways?"

All this was spoken low and fast. And low and fast beat the indecision in Complain's blood. He made no effort to come to a consciously debated decision; the nerves must be arbiter: mind was not trustworthy—it knew too much.

"That would require courage," he said at length.

The priest slapped his great thighs, yawning in nervous enthusiasm.

"No, Roy, you lie, true to the list of liars who begot you. If we went, we would be escaping, fleeing, evading the responsibilities of grown men in society. Ha, we will slip away furtively: It will be the old back-to-nature act, a fruitless attempt to return to the ancestral womb. Why, it would be the very depth and abyss of cowardice to leave here. Now, will you come with me?"

Some meaning beyond the words themselves hardened a decision in Complain. He would go! Always there had been that cloud just beyond his comprehension, from which he must escape. He slid off the bunk, trying

could devise.

"Go by yourself, Roy, if you so distrust my leadership! Why, you're like a woman, all bellyache and questioning. I'll tell you no more, except that my scheme is something too grand for your comprehension. Domination of the ship! That's it! Nothing less! Complete domination of the ship— *you* don't even know what the phrase means."

Cowed by the priest's ferocious visage, Complain merely said, "I was not going to refuse to come."

"You mean you will come?"

"Yes."

Marapper gripped his arm fervently, without a word. His cheeks gleamed.

"*Now* tell me who the other four are who come with us," Complain said, alarmed the moment he had committed himself.

Marapper released his arm.

"You know the old saying, Roy: the truth never set anyone free. You will learn soon enough. It is better that I do not tell you now. I plan that we shall start early next sleep. Not a word to anyone."

Half out of the door, he paused. Thrusting a hand into his tunic, he pulled something out and waved it triumphantly. Complain recognized it as a book, the collection of reading matter used by the extinct Giants.

"This is our key to power!" Marapper said dramatically, thrusting it back into its place of concealment. Then he closed the door behind him.

Idle as statuary, Complain stood in the center of the floor, only his head working. And in his head there was only a circle of thought, leading nowhere. But Marapper was the priest, Marapper had knowledge most others could not share, Marapper must lead. Belatedly, Complain went to the door, opened it and peered out.

and began to crouch behind it.

"What have you done?" Complain demanded. "Why are they after you? Why hide here? Why drag me into it?"

"It's no compliment. You just happened to be near and my legs were never constructed for running. My life's in danger."

While he was talking, Marapper stared wildly about, as if for a better hiding place, and then evidently decided to stay where he was. By adjusting a blanket over the far side of the bed he was screened from the doorway.

"They must have seen me come in here," he said. "It's not that I care for my own skin, but I've got plans. I let one of the guards in on this scheme of ours and he went straight in and told it to Zilliac."

"Why should I—" Complain began hotly. A scuffle outside gave them the briefest warning and then the door was hurled open, rebounding on its hinges. It missed Complain by inches only, for he stood half behind it.

The crisis powered his inspiration. Flinging both hands over his face, he bent forward, groaning loudly and staggering, making believe the edge of the door had struck him. Through his fingers he saw Zilliac, the lieutenant's right-hand man, next in line for the lieutenancy, burst into the room and kick the door shut behind him. He glared contemptuously at Complain.

"Where's the priest? I saw him come in here."

As he turned, dazer ready, to survey the room, Complain whipped up Gwenny's wooden stool by one leg and brought it down at the base of Zilliac's skull, square across the tense neck. A splintering sound of wood and bone, and Zilliac toppled full length. Marapper stood up. With a heave, all teeth showing, he tipped the heavy bunk over sideways, sending it falling across the fallen man.

Death was as common as cockroaches in the slum tribes.

"Death is the longest part of a man," said a folk poem. This stretched-out spectacle, so frequently met with, was the subject of much of the Teaching: there had to be a formal way of dealing with it. It was fearful, and fear must not be allowed to lodge in a man. The automatic man in Complain, confronted with death now, fell straight into the first gesture of prostration, as he had been brought up to do.

Seeing their cue, Marapper and Meller instantly joined him, Marapper crying softly aloud. Only when their intricate business was over and the last Long Journey said did they lapse back into something like normality.

"I've yet to hear what they were after you for, priest," Meller said.

"The greater credit to the speed of your assistance," said Marapper smoothly, making toward the door. Meller put his arm across it and answered, "I want to hear what you are involved in. It seems to me I am now involved in it too."

When Marapper drew up but did not speak, Complain said impetuously. "Why not let him come with us, Marapper?"

"So . . .," the artist said reflectively. "You're both leaving Quarters! Good luck to you, friends—I hope you will find whatever you are going looking for. Myself, I'd rather stay here safely and paint; thanks for the invitation."

"Brushing aside the minor point that no invitation was offered, I agree with all you say," Marapper said. "You showed up well just now, friend, but I need only men of action with me: and at that I want a handful, not an army."

As Meller stepped aside and Marapper took hold of the door handle, the latter's attitude softened and he said, "Our lives are of microscopically small moment, but I believe that we now owe them to you, painter. Back

die for Zinnac's death. He waited tensely, picking nervously at an irritation in one hand. He glanced down at length, and saw a minute splinter embedded in the flesh of his palm. The legs of Gwenny's stool had been rough.

chopped into little pieces. Let's get into the ponies if we're going.

Marapper swung toward the questioner. Then he turned away, not deigning to reply. Instead, he pushed open the door and called, "Come out, Roy, and meet your companions."

Wary, a good hunter avoiding a possible trap, Complain appeared with his dazer in his hand. Quietly, he surveyed the three who stood by Marapper; he knew them all well: Bob Fermour, elbows resting placidly on the two bulging pouches strapped to his belt; Wantage, rotating his fending stick endlessly in his hands; and Ern Roffery the Valuer, face challenging and unpleasant. For long seconds, Complain stared at them as they stood waiting.

"I'm not leaving Quarters with them, Marapper," he said definitely. "If they are the best you can find, count me out I thought this was going to be an expedition."

"So it is an expedition," the priest roared, spitting in his rage. "It is an expedition, and by hem you'll all come into Deadways with me if I have to carry your corpses there one by one."

"What are you making such a fuss about anyway, Complain?" Wantage shouted. "Why are *you* coming? I'm sure I don't want your company!"

The priest's short sword was suddenly between them. They could see his knuckles white from his grip on the handle.

"As I am a holy man," he growled, "I swear by every drop of rancid blood in Quarters, I'll Long Journey the next man that speaks."

They stood there stiff with hostility, not speaking.

"Sweet, peace-making blade," Marapper whispered, and then, in ordinary tones, unhitching a pack from his shoulder, "Strap this harness on your back, Roy, and pull yourself together. Soften up, all of you, and

you!

Marapper never paused in his stride, and the others came slowly on with him. For Complain, there was a certain fascination about it that he could not explain.

"You are getting too short-sighted for that job, my friend," the priest called. "I'll see Zilliac and get you taken off it. It is I, Marapper your priest, the agent of your doubtful sanity, with some well-wishers. No blood for you tonight, man. I have something important here for you."

During this interchange, Marapper's advance had not faltered. The guard hesitated uncertainly; other guards were within hail, but a false alarm could mean lashes for him, and he was anxious to preserve his present state of misery intact.

Drawing the short sword swiftly from under his cloak, Marapper with a grunt dug it deep into the guard's stomach, twisted it, and caught the body neatly over his shoulder as it doubled forward.

"That was neatly done, father," Wantage said, impressed. "Couldn't have improved on it myself!"

"Masterly!" Roffery exclaimed, respect in his voice. It was good to see a priest who so ably practiced what he preached.

"Pleasure," grunted Marapper, "but keep your voices low. Fermour, take this, will you?"

The body was transferred to Bob Fermour's shoulder; he, being five foot eight, and nearly a head taller than the others, could manage it most easily. Marapper wiped his blade on Complain's jacket, bolstered it, and turned his attention to the mesh gate.

From one of his voluminous pockets, he produced a pair of wire cutters, and with these snicked a connection on the gate. He tugged at the handle; it gave about an inch and then stuck. He heaved and growled,

and seized them, then lowered himself gingerly hand over hand down fifteen feet to the next level. The elevator shaft yawning below him, he swung himself on to the narrow ledge, clung to the mesh with one hand and applied his cutters with the other. Tugging carefully, levering with his foot against an upright, he worked the gate open wide enough to squeeze through.

One at a time, the others followed. Complain was the last to leave the upper level. He climbed down the cable, silently bidding Quarters an uncordial farewell, and emerged with the others. The five of them stood silently in rustling twilight, peering about them.

They were on strange territory, but one stretch of ponic warren is much like another.

Marapper shut the gate behind them and then faced forward, squaring his shoulders and adjusting his cloak.

"That's quite enough action for one wake, for an old priest like me," he said, "unless any of you care to start a dispute about leadership?"

"That was never under dispute," Complain said.

"There'll be enough trouble," Wantage prophesied, swinging the bad side of his face toward the walls of growth around them. "It would make sense if we saved our swords for other stomachs."

Reluctantly, they agreed with him.

Marapper brushed at his short cloak, scowling thoughtfully; it was bloodied at the hem.

"We shall sleep now," he said. "We will break into the first convenient room and use that for camp. This must be our routine every sleep: we cannot remain in the corridors —the position is too exposed. In a compartment, we can post guards and sleep safe."

"Would we not be better advised to move further from Quarters

Yes, there is something else I want you to do. I want you to obey me implicitly, but I also require you to swear you will not turn on one another. I'm not asking you to trust each other, or anything stupid like that. I'm not asking for any breaches of the canons of the Teaching—if we're to make the Long Journey, we're making it Orthodox. But we cannot afford constant quarreling and fighting; your easy times in Quarters are over.

"Some of the dangers we may meet we know about— mutants, Outsiders, other tribes, and finally the people of Forwards themselves. But have no doubt that there will be dangers of which we know nothing. When you feel spite for one of your fellows, nurse that bright spark for the unknown; it will be needed."

He looked searchingly at them again.

"Swear to it," he commanded.

They agreed to forego the privilege of private quarrels, and pressed slowly into the ponc fringes, the priest leading, fishing out an enormous bundle of magnetic keys. Some yards on, they came to the first door. They halted, and the priest began to try his keys one by one on the shallow impression of the lock.

Complain, meanwhile, pushed on a little further and called back to them after a minute.

"There's a door here which has been broken into," he said. "Another tribe has evidently passed this way at some time. It would save us trouble if we went in here."

They moved up to him, passing back the rattling canes. The door stood open only a finger's breadth, and they eyed it with some apprehension. Every door presented a challenge, an entry to the unknown; all knew of tales of death leaping from behind these silent doors, and the fear had been ingrained in them since childhood.

wondering dimly how long ago the havoc had been wrought, feeling perhaps a memory of that savagery still in the air, for savagery—unlike virtue—endures long after its originators have perished.

"We can sleep here," Marapper said shortly. "We will eat and then you will draw lots for guard duty."

They ate frugally from the supplies in their packs, wrangling over the meal as to whether or not a guard was necessary. Since Complain and Fermour held it was necessary and Roffery and Wantage held it was not, the sides were equally balanced, and the priest did not find himself bound to join the disagreement. He ate in silence, wiped his hands delicately on a rag, and then said, from a still full mouth, "Roffery, you will guard first, then Wantage, so that you two will have the earliest opportunity of proving yourselves right. Next sleep, Fermour and Complain will guard."

"You said we should draw lots," Wantage said angrily.

"I changed my mind."

He said it so bluntly that Roffery instinctively abandoned that line of attack and remarked, "You, I suppose, father, never guard?"

Marapper spread his hands and edged a look of childlike innocence on to his face. "My dear friends, your priest guards you all the time, awake or asleep."

Rapidly, he pulled a round object from under his cloak and continued, changing the subject, "With this instrument, which I had the forethought to relieve Zilliac of, we can scientifically regulate our spells of guard so that no man does more than another. You see that it has on this side a circle of numbers and three hands or pointers. It is called a watch, so called after a period of guard, which is—as you know—also a watch. The Giants made it for this purpose, which shows that they too had Outsiders and madmen to deal with."

composed himself for sleep. Without much hesitation, the others did likewise, except Roffery, who watched them unlovingly.

They were all lying on the floor when Wantage spoke hesitantly. "Father," he called, with a note of pleading in his voice. "Will you not give us a prayer for the safety of our skins?"

"I'm too tired to intercede for anyone's skin," Marapper replied.

"A short prayer, father."

"As you wish. Children, expansion to our egos, let us pray." He began to pray as he lay hunched on the dirty floor, his words coming indifferently at first, and then gaining power as he drew interest from this train of thought.

"O Consciousness, we gathered here are doubly unworthy to be thy vessels, for we know we have imperfections and do not seek to purge them as we ought to do. We are a poor lot, in a poor way of life; yet as we contain thee there is hope for us. O Consciousness, direct particularly these five poor vessels, for there is more hope for us than for those we left behind, and therefore there is more room for thee in us. We know that when thou art not here there is only the adversary, Subconscious, in us; make our-thoughts to swim solely in thee. Make our hands quicker, our arms stronger, our eyes sharper, and our tempers fiercer: that we may overcome and kill all who oppose us. May we smite and sunder them! May we scatter their entrails! So that we come in the end to a position of power, in full possession of thee, and in thy full, possession. And may thy spark breathe in us until that last dread moment when the adversary claims us, and we too take the Long Journey."

As he had intoned, the priest had risen to his knees and stretched his hands above his head. Now he, with all the others copying the movement, drew his outstretched right index finger symbolically, ritualistically,

micked into the room. The plants grew so rapidly that, when Complain woke, the younger ones would be inches taller and the older ones wilting against the restriction of the bulkheads; then, choking and choked would alike be nipped by the next dark. But he failed to see in this ceaseless jostling a parallel with the human lives about him.

travel then, when our flashlights will give us away to any watchers. Before we go, however, I will tell you something of our plans; and for that it is necessary to say something about the ship."

He looked around at them, eating extravagantly as he spoke.

"And the first point is, that we are in a ship. All agreed there?"

His gaze forced some sort of a reply from each of them; an "Of course" from Fermour; an impatient grunt from Wantage, as if he found the question irrelevant; an airy wave of the hand, meaningless, from Roffery; and from Complain, "No."

To the latter, Marapper immediately turned his full attention.

"Then you'd better understand quickly, Roy," he said. "First, the proofs. Listen hard—I feel strongly on this question, and a show of determined stupidity might make me regrettably angry."

He walked around the shattered furniture as he spoke, very emphatic and solid, his face heavy with seriousness.

"Now, Roy—the main thing is that not being in a ship is vastly different from being in it. You know—we all know —only what being in one is like; it is that which makes us think there is only ship. But there are many places which are *not* ship—huge places, many of them. . . . This I know because I have seen records left by the Giants. The ship was made by the Giants, for their own purposes which are —as yet—hidden from us."

"I've heard this argument in Quarters," Complain said unhappily. "Suppose I believe all you say, Marapper. What then? Ship or world, what's the difference?"

"You don't see. Look!" Savagely, the priest leaned forward and snatched a handful of ponc leaves, waving them before Complain's face.

"These are *natural*, something grown," he said.

He burst into the rear room, giving a broken china bowl a

Only the ship is left. Only the ship and, trapped in it, all the tribes of man. There was a catastrophe: something went terribly wrong somewhere, and we have been left to an unknown fate. It is a judgment passed on us for some awful, unguessable sin committed by our forefathers."

"To the hull with all this talk," Wantage said angrily.

"Why don't you try and forget you're a priest, Marapper? How has this any bearing on what we are going to do?"

"It has every bearing," Marapper said, sticking his hands into his pockets, and then withdrawing one to pick at a tooth. "Of course, I'm only really interested in the theological aspects of the question. But the point as far as you are concerned is that the ship, by definition, has come *from* somewhere and is going *to* somewhere. These somewheres are more important than the ship; they are where we should be. They are natural places.

"All that is no mystery, except to fools; the mystery is, why is there this conspiracy to keep us from knowing where we are? What is going on here behind our backs?"

"Something's gone wrong somewhere," Wantage answered eagerly.

"It's what I've always said: something's gone wrong."

"Well, cease to say it in my presence," the priest snapped. It seemed to him that his position of authority was weakened by allowing others to agree with him. "There is a conspiracy. We have been plotted against. The driver or captain of this ship is concealed somewhere, and we are forging on under his direction, knowing neither the journey nor the destination. He is a madman who keeps himself shut away while we are all punished for this sin our forefathers committed."

This sounded to Complain both horrifying and unlikely, although no more unlikely than the whole idea of being in a moving vessel.

For answer, the priest hung back his cloak and left inside his tunic, with a flourish, he produced the book Complain had already seen. He waved the title under their eyes, but this meant little except to Roffery, the only fluent reader among them. To the others, the syllables were intelligible, but they were unable to master unfamiliar words without long effort. Pulling the book out of their reach again, Marapper explained condescendingly that it was called *Manual of Electrical Circuits of Starship*. He also explained—for this explanation gave him an opportunity for boasting—how the book had come into his possession. It had been lying in the store in which Zilliac's guards had found the cache of dyes, and had been confiscated and added to a pile of goods awaiting inspection in the lieutenancy. There Marapper had seen it and, recognizing its value instantly, had pocketed it for his own use. Unfortunately, one of the guards had caught him, and the silence of this loyal man could only be bought by the promise that he should go with Marapper and find power for himself.

"That being the guard Meller dispatched outside my room?" Complain asked.

"The same," said the priest, automatically making the token of mourning. "When he had thought over the scheme he very likely decided he could get most profit from it by revealing it all to Zilliac."

"Who knows he was wrong about that?" Roffery commented sardonically.

Ignoring this thrust, the priest spread his book open and thumped a diagram.

"Here is the whole key to my campaign," he said impressively. "This is a plan of the entire ship."

To his annoyance, he had to interrupt his speech at once to explain what a plan was, the concept being entirely new to them. This was

these corridors were ranged the compartments. Sometimes the compartments were just a nest of offices, sometimes they were so big they filled a whole level. All decks were connected together by one large corridor running right through the longitudinal axis of the ship: the Main Corridor. But there were also subsidiary connections between the circular corridors of one deck and those of the decks on either side.

One end of the ship was clearly labeled STERN. At the other end was a small blister labeled CONTROL; Marapper planted his finger on it.

"This is where we shall find the captain," he said. "Whoever is here has power over the ship. We are going there."

"This plan makes it as easy as signing off a log," Roffery declared, rubbing his hands. "All we've got to do is strike along the Main Corridor. Perhaps we weren't such fools to join you after all."

"It won't be as easy as that," Complain said. "You've spent all your wakes comfortably in Quarters, you don't know what conditions are like. Main Corridor is fairly well known to hunters, but it does not go anywhere, as a good corridor should."

"Despite your naive way of putting things, you are correct, Roy," the priest agreed. "But I have found in this book the reason why it does not go anywhere. All along the Main Corridor, between each deck, were emergency doors. Each circle of deck was built to be more or less self-sufficient, so that in time of crisis it could be cut off on its own and its inhabitants still survive."

He flipped through pages of complex diagrams.

"Even I cannot pretend to understand all this, but it is clear that there was an emergency, a fire or something, and the doors of the Main Corridor have remained closed ever since."

"That's why—aside from the ponics—it's so difficult to get

but by common consent they kept as close together as possible, it being uncomfortable on the nerves to be exposed either at the front or the rear of the little party. There was, too, another objection to walking by the walls: here the chitinous ponic seeds lay thickest, where they had dropped after being shot against this barrier, and they crunched noisily as they were stepped on. To Complain's experienced hunter's eye, their plenitude was a sign that there were few wild animals in the area, the seeds being delicacies to dog and pig alike.

No diminution in the plague of flies was noticeable. They whined endlessly about the travelers' ears. As Roffery in the lead swung his hatchet at the ponics, he wielded it frequently around his head, in a dangerous attempt to rid himself of this irritation.

When they came to the first subsidiary connection between decks, it was clearly enough marked. It stood in a short side corridor and consisted of two single metal doors a yard apart, each capable of closing off the corridor, although now blocked open with the ubiquitous green growth. Before one, the words DECK 61 were stenciled and, after the other, DECK 60. Marapper grunted in satisfaction at this, but was too hot to make further comment. Complain had come across such connections before, and seen similar inscriptions, but they had meant nothing; now he tried to integrate the previous knowledge into the conception of a moving ship: but as yet the idea was too new to be acceptable.

On Deck 60 they met other men.

Fermour was now in the lead, hacking his way stoically ahead, when they came level with an open door. Open doors always signified danger, but since they had to pass the thresholds, they grouped together and passed *en bloc*. So far, these distractions had been uneventful. This time, they were confronted by an old woman.

Expansion to your separate egos, plague on your eyes, touch us, and the curse that is on us will be on you."

"Expansion to your ear, madam," said Marapper sulkily. "Come on, heroes, we don't need to linger here. Let's move before somebody rougher comes to investigate her crazy screaming."

They turned back into the tangles. The three in the room watched them go without stirring. They might have been the last remnants of a Deadways tribe; more likely, they were fugitives, eking out a slender existence in the wilds.

From then on, the travelers found signs of other mutants and hermits. The ponics were frequently trampled, progress being consequently easier; but the mental strain of keeping watch on all sides was greater, although they were never actually challenged.

The next subsidiary connection between decks that they came to was closed, and the steel door, fitting closely into its sockets, resisted their united attempt at opening it.

"There must obviously *be* a way to open it," Roffery said angrily.

"Tell the priest to look it up in his book," Wantage replied. "For me, I'm sitting down here and having something to eat."

Marapper was all for pressing on, but the others agreed with Wantage, and they made a meal in silence.

"What happens if we come on a deck where all the doors are like that?" Complain wanted to know.

"That won't happen," Marapper said firmly. "Otherwise we would never have heard of Forwards at all. There obviously is a route—probably more than one—left open to those parts. We just have to move to another level and try there."

Finally they found their way into Deck 59 and then, with

darkness.

They pushed into a side room which someone had already broken into. It was piled high with rolls of heavy material, which seemed to be covered by an intricate pattern. The probing beam of Fermour's flashlight dislodged a swarm of moths. With a thick, buttery sound, they rose from the fabric, leaving it patternless, but sagging with deep-chewed holes. Around their room they whirled, or past the men into the corridor. It was like walking into a dust storm.

Complain dodged as a large moth bore toward his face. For the softest moment he had an odd sensation that he was to recall later: although the moth flew by his ear, he had an hallucinatory idea it had plunged straight on into his head; he seemed to feel it big in his very mind; then it was gone.

"We won't get much sleep here," he said distastefully, and led on down the marshy corridor.

Through the next door that opened to them, they found an ideal place to pitch camp. This was a machine shop of some kind, a large chamber filled with benches and lathes and other gadgets in which they had no interest. A faucet supplied them with an unsteady flow of water which, once turned on, they could not turn off; it trickled steadily down the sink, to the vast reclamation processes functioning somewhere below the deck on which they stood. Wearily, they washed and drank and ate some of their provisions. As they were finishing, the dark came on, the natural dark which arrived one sleep-wake in four.

No prayers were requested, and the priest volunteered none. He was tired and, too, he was occupied with a thought which dogged the others. They had traveled only three decks: a long spell of walking lay between them and Control. For the first time, Marapper realized that, whatever

doorway. It seemed highly unlikely that anything could have abducted Roffery: there would have been a scuffle which would have aroused the others. Therefore he had gone voluntarily. But why? Had he heard something in the corridor?

Certainly there was a distant sound, as throaty as the noise of running water. The longer Complain listened, the louder it seemed. With a glance back at his three sleeping companions, Complain slipped out to trace the sound. This course seemed to him preferable to having to wake the priest and explain that he had dozed.

Once in the corridor, he cautiously flashed a light and picked up Roffery's footprints in the sludge, pointing toward the unexplored end of this level. Walking was easier now that the tangle was sagging into the center, away from the walls. Complain moved slowly, not showing light and keeping his dazer ready for action.

At a corridor junction he paused, pressing on again with the liquid sound to guide him. The ponics petered out and were replaced by deck, washed bare of soil by a stream of water. Complain allowed it to flow against his boots, walking carefully so as not to splash. This was new in his experience. A light burned ahead. As he neared it, he saw it was shining in a vast chamber beyond two plate-glass doors. When he got to the doors, he stopped; on them was painted a notice, SWIMMING POOL, which he pronounced to himself without understanding. Peering through the doors, he saw a shallow flight of steps going up, with pillars at the top of them; behind one pillar stood the shadowy figure of a man.

Complain ducked instantly away. When the man did not move, Complain concluded he had not been seen and looked again, to observe that the figure was staring away from him. It looked like Roffery. Cautiously, Complain opened one of the glass doors; a wave washed

other's face.

Neither of them had ever been in such a large space. Lit only by one bulb which burned to their left, it seemed to stretch forever into the darkness. The floor was a sheet of water on which ripples slid slowly outward. Under the light, the water shone like metal. Breaking this smooth expanse at the far end, an erection of tubes suspended planks over the water at various heights, and to either side were rows of huts, barely distinguishable for shadow.

"It's beautiful!" Roffery breathed. "Isn't it beautiful?"

Complain stared at him in astonishment. The word "beautiful" had an erotic meaning, and was applied only to particularly desirable women. Yet he saw that there was a sight here which needed a special choice of vocabulary. His eyes switched back to the water: it was entirely outside their experience. Previously, water had meant only a dribble from a tap, a spurt from a hose, or the puddle at the bottom of a utensil. He wondered vaguely what this amount could be for. Sinister, uncanny, the view had another quality also, and it was this Roffery was trying to describe.

"I know what it is," Roffery murmured. He was staring at the water as if hypnotized, the lines of his face so relaxed that his appearance was changed. "I've read about this in old books brought to me for valuing." He paused, and then quoted, 'Then dead men rise up never, and even the longest river winds somewhere safe to sea.' Complain, we've stumbled on the sea. I've often read about it. For me, it proves Marapper's wrong about our being in a ship; we're in an underground city."

This meant little to Complain; he was not interested in labels of things. What struck him was to perceive something he had worried over till now: why Roffery had left his important office to come on the priest's hazardous expedition. He saw that the other had a reason akin to Complain's own: a

I didn't ask you to come after me. Why be afraid of the Giants?
Dazers'll dispatch a man however long he measures."

"We'd better be getting back, Roffery. There's no point in standing here; besides, I'm on watch."

"You might have thought of that before," Roffery said. "We'll bring Marapper here later to see what he makes of the sea. Before we go, I'm just going to look at something over there. That was where the Giants disappeared."

He indicated a point near at hand, beside the huts, where a square of curb was raised some four inches above the water-line. The solitary light which overhung it looked almost as if it had been temporarily erected by the Giants to cast a glow there.

"There's a trapdoor inside that curb," Roffery whispered. "The Giants went down there and closed it after them. Come on, we'll go and look."

He seemed strangely excited, like a child, with a child's innocent disregard of danger. They paddled one behind the other on the fringes of the sea, weapons ready, and so came to the trapdoor, dry behind its protecting curb.

Roffery stooped down and slowly lifted the hatch. Gentle light flowed out from the opening. They saw an iron ladder leading down into a pit full of piping. Two overalled figures were working silently at the bottom of the pit. As soon as the hatch was opened, they must have heard the magnified hiss of running water in the chamber above them, for they looked up and fixed Roffery and Complain with an astonished gaze. Undoubtedly they were Giants: they were monstrosly tall and thick, and their faces were dark.

Roffery's nerve deserted him at once. He dropped the hatch down with a slam, and turned and ran. Complain splashed close behind. Next

Complain's.

The Giant staggered and fell with a splash which roused the echoes. As far as Complain could remember afterward, the monster had been unarmed.

The second Giant was armed. Seeing the fate of his companion, he crouched on the ladder, shielded by the curb, and fired twice. The first shot got Roffery in the face. Without a sound, he slipped beneath the water.

Complain dived flat, kicking up spray, but he was an easy target for the marksman. His temple stopped the second shot. Limply, he slumped into the water, face down.

The Giant climbed out of the pit and came toward him.

head. It was nowing backward, or he was moving forward. he could not tell which, and closed his eyes again. A steady increase in bodily sensation told him his ankles and wrists were lashed together.

His head ached, and a foul smell pervaded his lungs, making breathing an agony. He realized the Giant had shot him with some kind of gas pellet, instantly effective but ultimately, perhaps, innocuous.

Again he opened his eyes. The roof still seemed to be traveling backward, but he felt a steady tremor through his body, telling him he was on some kind of moving vehicle. Even as he looked, the movement stopped. He saw a Giant loom beside him, presumably the one who had shot and captured him. Through half-closed eyes, Complain saw the immense creature was on hands and knees in this low place. Feeling on the roof, he now knuckled some kind of switch, and a section of the roof swung upward.

From above came light and the sound of deep voices. Complain was later to recognize this slow, heavy tone as the typical manner of speech of the Giants. Before he had time to prepare for it, he was seized and dragged off the conveyance and passed effortlessly up through the opening. Large hands took hold of him and dumped him not ungently against the wall of a room.

"He's coming around," a voice commented, in a curious accent Complain hardly understood.

This observation worried him a great deal; partly because he thought he had given no indication he was recovering, partly because the remark suggested they might now gas him again.

Another body was handed up through the opening, the original Giant climbing up after it. A muttered conversation took place. From the little Complain could hear, he gathered that the body was that of the Giant

have let them go without interfering.

The Giants spoke so sluggishly that Complain had no difficulty in understanding, despite the strange accent. Of its general intention he could make nothing. He was almost beginning to lose interest when he became the topic of conversation, and his interest abruptly revived.

"You realize you are in trouble, Randall," the stern voice said. "You know the rules: it means a court-martial. You will have difficulty in proving self-defense, to my mind. Especially as the other dizzy was drowned."

"He wasn't drowned. I fished him out of the water and put him on the closed inspection hatch to recover in his own time." Randall sounded surly.

"Leaving that question aside—what do you propose doing with this specimen you've brought here?" Curtis demanded.

"He'd have drowned if I had left him there."

"Why bring him here?"

"Couldn't we just kill him, Mr. Curtis?" One of the Giants spoke for the first time.

"Out of the question. Criminal breach of the rules. Besides, could you kill a man in cold blood?"

"He's only a dizzy, Mr. Curtis," spoken defensively.

"Could he go for rehabilitation?" Randall suggested.

"He's too old, man! You know they only take children. You'll have to take him back, that's all." The voice was curt and decisive. Complain took heart from it; nothing would suit him better than to be taken back. Not, he realized, that he had much fear of the Giants; now he was among them, they seemed too slow and gentle for malice. Curtis's was not an attitude he understood, but it was certainly convenient.

There was some argument between the Giants as to how Complain's

Complain, jumping him, and then reporting back like lightning to the hole. They evidently carried some sort of reassurance, for three more figures promptly whisked into view, beckoning to others behind them. They were all rats.

The five scouts wore spiked collars around their necks; they were small and lean of body; one had lost an eye, in the vacant socket of which gristle twitched sympathetically with the glances of the surviving pupil. Of the next three to appear, one was jet black and obviously the leader. He stood upright, pawing the air with little mauve hands. He squeaked furiously and the five scouts circuted Complain again, flashing along his leg, grinning momentarily into his eye, scrapping over his neck, slithering down his blouse.

During this activity, Complain did an amount of involuntary flinching. He was used to rats, but there was an organized quality to these that disturbed him; also, he fancied that he could manage little by way of defense, should they decide it suited their cause to gnaw his eyes out.

But the rats were on something other than a delicacy hunt. The rear guard now appeared. Panting from a hole in the wall came four more buck rats. They dragged a small cage which, under the whistled orders of the rat-leader, was pulled rapidly to a position before Complain's face, where he had every opportunity of inspecting it and inhaling the odor from it.

The animal in the cage was larger than the rats. From the fur at the top of its oval skull sprouted two long ears; its tail merely a white scut of fluff. Complain had not seen a creature of this species before, but he recognized it from the descriptions of old hunters back in Quarters. It was a rabbit, scarce because natural prey for the rat. He looked at it with interest, and it stared nervously back at him.

As the rabbit was drawn up, the five original scout rats spread out

Complain screamed with anguish.

Instantly, the desolating gibberish ceased, the formless inquiry died. The scout rats leaped from their posts, and they and the four driver rats spun the imprisoned rabbit around and shot the cage back into the wall. Spurring them savagely, the rat-leader followed with his guard. Next moment, the square of wall banged down behind them—only just in time, for a Giant burst into the room to find what the screaming was about.

He rolled Complain over with his foot. The latter stared up hopelessly at him, trying to speak.

Reassured, the Giant lumbered back to the other room, this time leaving open the connecting door.

"The dizzy's got a headache," he announced.

Complain could hear their voices. They seemed to be talking to some kind of machine. But he was almost totally absorbed by the ordeal with the rats. A madman had lived for a moment within his skull! The Teaching warned him that his mind was a foul place. The holy trinity, Froyd, Yung, and Bassit, had gone alone through the terrible barriers of sleep, death's brother; there they found—not nothing, as man had formerly believed—but grottoes and subterranean labyrinths full of ghouls and evil treasure, leeches, and the lusts that burn like acid. Man stood revealed to himself: a creature of infinite complexity and horror. It was the aim of the Teaching to let as much of this miasmic stuff out to the surface as possible. But supposing the Teaching had never gone far enough?

It spoke, allegorically, of conscious and subconscious. Supposing there was a real Subconscious, a being capable of taking over the mind

gray roof flowed overhead, punctuated by criss-crossing pipe, wire, and tube.

At length they stopped. Fumbling on the roof, the Giant pressed his fingers to it, and a square opened above them. Complain was hauled out of the hole, carried a few yards, bundled through a door, and dropped. He was back in Deadways: its smell to a hunter was unmistakable. The Giant hovered over him wordlessly, a shadow in shadows, and then vanished.

Shielding his flashlight till it gave the barest whisper of illumination, Complain moved to the door and looked out at blackness. As far as he could see, a gulf stretched infinitely before him. He slid out, feeling along to the right, and found a row of doors. Using the light again, he found damp, bare tile underfoot. Then he knew where he was; a hollowness in his ear reinforced the certainty. The Giant had brought him back to what Roffery had called the sea.

Complain turned and walked from the chamber, careful not to wake the echoes. He headed back to Marapper's camp. The ground still squelched lightly underfoot, holding its moisture. He brushed gently by the sagging muck of last season's ponics, and came to the camp door. He whistled eagerly, wondering who would be on guard: Marapper? Wantage? Fermour?

His signal went unanswered. Holding himself tense, he pushed into the room. It was empty. They had moved on. Complain was alone in Deadways.

Self-control snapped then; he had gone through too much. Giants, rats, rabbits, he could bear—but not the scabrous solitudes of Deadways. He rioted around the room, flinging up the splintered wood, kicking, cursing, out into the corridor, roaring, swearing, tearing a way through the vegetable mash, howling, blaspheming.

wake after leaving Quarters, to Deck 29.

By now, Roy Complain had begun to believe in the ship theory. The reorientation had been insensible but thorough. To this, the intelligent rats had greatly contributed. When Complain had told his companions of his capture by the Giants, he had omitted the rat incident; something fantastic about it, he knew instinctively, would have defied his powers of description and wakened Marapper's and Wantage's derision. But now he found his thoughts turning frequently to those fearsome creatures. He saw a parallel between the lives of the rats and humans in their manlike conduct of ill-treating a fellow creature, the rabbit. The rats survived where they could, giving no thought to the nature of their surroundings; Complain could only say the same of himself until now.

Marapper had listened to the tale of the Giants intently, commenting little. Once he said, "Then do they know where the Captain is?"

He was particularly pressing for full details of what the Giants had said to each other. He repeated the names "Curtis" and "Randall" several times, as if muttering a spell.

"Who was this little dog they went to speak to?" he asked.

"I think it was a name," Complain said. "Not a real dog."

"A name of *what*?"

"I don't know. I tell you I was half-conscious." Indeed the more he thought, the less clear he was as to what exactly had been said. Even at the time, the episode had been sufficiently outside his normal experience to render it half-incredible.

"Was it another Giant's name, do you think, or a thing's name?" the priest pressed, tugging at the lobe of his ear, as if to extract the facts that way.

"I don't *know*, Marapper. I can't remember. They just said they were

and self-sufficient, the priest's nature also changed. His voracity had gone, and the vitality from which it sprang. At last he realized the true magnitude of the task he had set himself, and was forced to put his whole will toward enduring.

"Been trouble here—old trouble," he said at one place in their trek, leaning against the wall and looking ahead into the middle level of Deck 29. The others paused with him. The tangles stretched for only a few yards in front of them, then began the darkness in which they could not grow. The cause of the light failure was obvious: ancient weapons, such as Quarters did not possess, had blasted holes in the roof and walls of the corridor. A heavy cabinet of some kind protruded through the roof, and the nearby doors had been buckled out of their sockets. For yards around, everything was curiously pockmarked and pitted from the force of the explosion.

"At least we'll be free of the cursed tangle for a while," Wantage remarked, drawing his flashlight. "Come on, Marapper."

The priest continued to lean where he was, pulling at his nose between first finger and thumb.

"We must be getting close to Forwards' territory," he said. "I'm afraid our lights may give us away."

"You walk in the dark if you feel like it," Wantage retorted. He moved forward, and Fermour did the same. Without a word, pushing past Marapper, Complain followed suit. Grumbling, the priest tagged on; nobody suffered indignity with more dignity than he.

Getting near the edge of shadow, Wantage flicked his light on, probing ahead. Then the strangeness began to take them. The first thing that Complain observed which went

his mouth speechlessly opening and shutting. Taking the priest's arm, Fermour spun him around and pushed him back into the safe area. Then Fermour bunched his stocky form and dived out into the dark for Wantage, who was blaspheming quietly near the floor; glissading off the wall, Fermour seized him, braked himself with an out-thrust heel, and floated softly back on the rebound. He steadied Wantage, who staggered like a drunken man.

Thrilled by this display, Complain saw at once that here was an ideal way of travel. Whatever had happened in the corridor—he dimly supposed that the air had changed in some way, although it was still breathable—thay could proceed quickly along it in a series of leaps. Getting cautiously to his feet and snapping on his light, he took a tentative jump forward.

His cry of surprise echoed loudly down the empty corridor. Only by putting up his hand did Complain save himself a knock on the head. The gesture sent him into a spin, so that he eventually landed on his back. He was dizzy: everything had been the wrong way up. Nevertheless, he was ten yards down the corridor. The others, fixed in a drum of light with a green backcloth, looked distant. Complain recalled the rambling memories of Ozbert Bergass; what had he said, in the truth Complain had mistaken for delirium? "The place where hands turn into feet and you fly through the air like an insect." Then the old guide had roved this far! Complain marveled to think of the miles of festering tunnel that lay between them and Quarters.

"The ship's gone crazy!" Marapper was saying.

"Why doesn't it show this on your map?" Wantage asked angrily. "I never did trust that thing."

"Obviously the weightlessness occurred *after* the map was made. Use your brains if you've got any," Fermour snapped. This unusual outburst

lightness enveloped them as they advanced, but the effect was less serious, and the ponics afforded them some stability.

They came level with a rent in the wall. Wantage peered past the ragged metal into the corridor. In the distance, a circular light winked out.

"Someone's following us," he said. They looked uneasily into each other's faces, and with one accord pressed onward again.

A metal counter on which ponics now sprouted in profusion blocked their way. They were forced to skirt it, going toward the center of the room to do so. This—in the days of the Giants—had been some kind of mess hall; long tables flanked with tubular steel chairs had covered the length and breadth of it. Now, with slow, vegetable force, ponics had borne up the furniture, entangling themselves in it, hoisting it waist high, where it formed a barrier to progress. The further they went, the more they were impeded. It proved impossible to get back to the wall.

As if in a nightmare, they cut their way past chairs and tables, half-blinded by midges which rose like dust from the foliage and settled on their faces. The thicket grew worse. Whole thickets of ponics had collapsed under this self imposed strain and were rotting in slimy clumps, on top of which more plants grew. A blight had settled in, a blue blight sticky to the touch, which soon made the party's knives difficult to handle.

Sweating and gasping, Complain glanced at Wantage, who labored beside him. The good side of the man's face was so swollen that his eye hardly showed.

They moved through a stippled wall of disease. The going was slow, but finally they broke through to the end of the room. Which end? They had lost all sense of direction. Marapper promptly sat down with his back to the smooth wall, settling heavily among the ponics seeds. He swabbed his brow exhaustedly.

in that heat was like standing in a jelly.

"It could be just a coincidence," Marapper said uneasily. "I can remember sections of lights failing before."

"It's Forwards—they're after us!" Complain whispered.

"All we've got to do is work our way quietly along the wall to the nearest door," Fermour said, repeating Complain's earlier words almost verbatim.

"Quietly?" Complain sneered. "They'd hear us at once. Best to stand still. Keep your dazers ready—they're probably trying to creep up on us."

So they stood there, sweating. Night was a hot breath around them.

"Give us the Litany, priest," Wantage begged. His voice was shaking.

"Not now, for gods ache," Fermour groaned.

They heard the priest flop to his knees. Wantage followed suit, wheezing in the thick gloom.

Marapper began monotonously on the General Belief. With an overpowering sense of futility, Complain thought: Here we finish up in this dead end, and the priest prays; I don't know why I ever mistook him for a man of action. He nursed the dazer, cocking an ear into the night, half-heartedly joining in the responses. Their voices rose and fell; by the end of it they all felt slightly better.

". . . and by so discharging our morbid impulses we may be freed from inner conflict," the priest intoned.

"And live in psychosomatic purity," they repeated.

"So that this unnatural life may be delivered down to Journey's End."

"And sanity propagated," they replied.

"And the ship brought home." The priest had the last word.

He crept around to each of them in the dark, his confidence restored by his performance, shaking their hands, wishing expansion to then: egos.

thick body, the latter was fighting to shake off the hands around his throat. Complain wrenched Wantage away by the shoulders. Wantage threw a wild punch, missed, grabbed for his dazer. He brought it up, but Complain had his wrist. Twisting savagely, he forced Wantage slowly back and then hit out at his jaw. In the dark, the blow missed its target, striking Wantage's chest instead. Wantage yelped and broke free, flailing his arms wildly around his body.

Again Complain had him. This time, his blow connected. Wantage went limp, tottered back into the ponics and fell heavily.

"Thanks," Fermour said; it was all he could manage to say.

They had all been shouting. Now they were silent, again listening. Only the creak of the ponics, the noise that went with them all their lives, and would continue, some said, when they made the Long Journey.

"I've seen a good many go like this," Marapper whispered. "But the division between sanity and insanity was always narrow with poor Wantage. This is a case of what we priests term hyper-claustrophobia; I suppose we all have it in some degree. It causes a lot of deaths in the Greene tribe, although they aren't all violent like this. Most of them just snap out like a light." He clicked his fingers to demonstrate.

"Never mind the case history, priest," Fermour said. "What are we going to do with him?"

"Leave him and clear out," Complain suggested.

"You don't see how interesting a case this is for me," said the priest reprovingly. "I've known Wantage since he was a small boy. Now he's going to die, here in the darkness. It's a wonderful, a humbling thing to look on a man's life as a whole: the work of art's completed, the composition's rounded off. A man takes the Long Journey, but he leaves his history behind in the minds of other men.

Complain said heavily, "perhaps you will reconnect, Marapper, that Wantage is *not* dead. He still lives to be a danger to us."

"I'm just going to finish him," Marapper said. "Your flashlight a moment, dimly. We don't want him squealing like a pig."

Bending down gingerly, Complain fought a splitting headache as the blood flow into his skull increased. The impulse came to do just what Wantage had done: hurl away the discomforts of reason, and charge blindly into the ambushed thickets, screaming. It was only later that he questioned his blind obedience to the priest at this dangerous hour; for it was obvious on reflection that Marapper had found some sort of mental refuge from this crisis by turning to the routines of priesthood; his exhumation of Wantage's childhood had been a camouflaged seeking for his own.

"I think I'm going to sneeze again," Wantage remarked, in a reasonable voice, from the ground. He had regained consciousness without their knowing it.

His face, in the pencil of light squeezed between Corn-plain's fingers, was scarcely recognizable. Normally pale and thin, the countenance was now swollen and suffused with blood; it might have been a gorged vampire's mask, had the eyes not been hot, rather than chill with death. And as the light of Complain's torch fell upon him, Wantage jumped.

Unprepared, Complain went down under a frontal attack. But, arms and legs flailing, Wantage paused only to knock his previous assailant out of the way. Then he was off through the tangles, crashing away from the little party.

Marapper's light came on, picking at the greenery, settling dimly on Wantage's retreating back.

"Put it out, you fool!" Fermour bellowed.

was firmly established, its boundaries fixed and unchanging. It looked like the result of organization rather than accident. Complain's conception of it had always been vague; in his mind it had featured as a place of dread, the more dreadful for being vague. Now he saw it was immensely larger than a village. It was almost a region in its own right.

Its very barriers differed from Quarters's make-shift affairs. The skirmishing party, as they pushed unceremoniously through the ponics, came first of all to a heavy curtain which, loaded with small bells, rang as they drew it aside. Beyond the curtain was a section of corridor, dirty and scarred but devoid of ponics, terminating in a barricade formed of desks and bunks, behind which Forwards guards stood ready with bows and arrows.

After an amount of hailing and calling, the skirmishing party—which numbered four men and two women—was allowed up to and past this last barricade. Beyond it was another curtain, this time of fine net, through which the hitherto ubiquitous midges, one of the scourges of Dead-ways, could not get. And beyond that lay Forwards proper.

For Complain, the incredible feature was the disappearance of ponic plants. Inside Quarters, of course, the thickets had been hacked or trampled down, but with indifferent enthusiasm and in the knowledge that the clearance was only temporary; often enough the old root system was allowed to remain covering the deck. And always there had been tokens of them about, from the sour-sweet miltex smell pervading the air to the dried staves used by men and the chitinous seeds played with by children.

Here the ponics had been swept away as if they had never existed. The detritus and soil that attended them had been completely removed; even the scoured pattern the roots made on the hard deck had been erased. The lighting, no longer filtered through a welter of greedy foliage, shone out

If only they hadn't taken my dazer . . . Complain said. Not only then dazers, but their packs and all their possessions had been taken. He prowled helplessly around the little room. Like many apartments in Quarters, it was all but featureless. By the door, two broken dials were set into a wall, a bunk was fixed into another wall, a grille in the ceiling provided a slight current of air. Nothing offered itself as a weapon.

Marapper tried to remove some clotted filth from his cloak. Working half-heartedly, he looked up with eagerness when the door was opened and two men appeared in the open doorway; pushing roughly past Fermour, the priest strode over to them.

"Take me to your lieutenant and expansion to your egos," he said. "It is important I see him as soon as possible. I am not a man to be kept waiting."

"You will all come with us," one of the pan- said firmly. "We have our orders."

Marapper saw fit to obey at once, although he kept up a flow of indignant protest as they were ushered into the corridor. They were led deeper into Forwards, passing several curious bystanders on their way.

His senses stimulated by a scent of danger, Complain took in every detail of their route. Here, as throughout Deadways, what Marapper had called the Main Corridor was blocked at each deck, and they followed a circuitous detour around the curving corridors and through the inter-deck doors.

By this method they traversed two decks. Complain saw with mild surprise the notice DECK 22 stenciled against the interdeck door; it was a link with all the seemingly unending deck numbers which had punctuated their trek; and it implied, unless Deadways began again on the other side of Forwards, that Forwards itself covered twenty-four decks.

other unusual feature was a girl, she stood regarding them from behind a desk, dressed in a neat gray uniform and with her hands restfully down at her sides. Her hair fell straight and neat about her neck. The hair was black, and her eyes were gray; her face was thin, pale, and intense, the exact curve of her cheek down to her mouth holding, Complain felt compulsively, a message he longed to understand. Although she was young and her brow magnificent, the impression she gave was not so much of beauty as of gentleness—until one's gaze dropped to her jaw. There lay delicate but unmistakable warning that it might be uncomfortable to know this girl too well.

She surveyed each of the prisoners in turn.

Complain experienced a strange shiver as her eyes engaged his; and something tense in Fermour's attitude revealed that he, too, felt an attraction to her. That her direct gaze defied a strict Quarters's taboo only made it the more disturbing.

"So you're Gregg's followers," she said finally, but the three men were too distracted by her presence to hear her first words. Now that she had seen them, she was obviously inclined to look at them no more; she tilted her neat head up and studied a patch of wall. "It is good that we have caught some of you at last. You have caused us much unnecessary irritation. Now you will be handed over to the torturers; we have to extract information from you. Or do you wish to surrender it voluntarily?"

Her voice had been cold and detached, using the tone the proud employ to the criminal. Torture, it implied, was natural.

"My name is Inspector Vyann; I investigate all captives brought into Forwards, and those who are coy about talking go on the presses. You in particular deserve nothing better. We need to know how to get to the leader of your band himself."

hoped for chilled her manner still further. The thicker grew the ice, the more voluble grew Marapper. His violent imagination, easily stimulated, pictured for him the ease with which this impervious young woman might snap her fingers and launch him on his Long Journey. At last he stepped forward, placing one hand gently on her desk.

"What you have failed to realize," he said impressively, "is this: that we are no ordinary captives. When your skirmishers waylaid us, we were on our way to Forwards with important news."

"Is that so?" Her raised eyebrows were a triumph. "You were telling me a moment ago you were only a humble priest from an obscure village. These contradictions bore us."

"Knowledge!" Marapper said. "Why question where it comes from? I warn you seriously, I am valuable."

Vyann permitted herself a small, frosty smile.

"So your lives should be spared because you hold some vital information among you. Is that it, priest?"

"I said *I* had the knowledge," Marapper pointed out. "If you also deign to spare the breath of my poor, ignorant friends here, I should, of course, be everlastingly delighted."

"So?" For the first time, she sat down behind the desk, a hint of humor lurking around her mouth, softening it. She pointed to Complain.

"You," she said. "If you have no knowledge to pour into our ears, what can you offer?"

"I am a hunter," Complain said. "My friend Fermour here is a farmer. If we have no knowledge, we can serve you with our strength."

Vyann folded her quiet hands on the desk, not really bothering to look at him. "Your priest has the right idea, I think: intelligence could bribe us, muscle could not. There is plenty of muscle in Forwards already."

The newcomer was impressive. Deep lines ran down his face, and his eroded appearance was increased by the inroads of gray into his still yellow hair. His eyes were wide-awake, his mouth autocratic. He relaxed his expression to smile at Vyann, and conferred quietly with her in one corner, thrusting occasional glances at Marapper as he listened to what she was saying.

"How about making a dash for it?" Fermour whispered to Complain in a choked voice.

"Don't be a fool," Complain whispered back. "We'd never get out of this room, much less past the barrier guards."

Fermour muttered something inaudible, looking almost as if he might attempt a break on his own. But at that moment the man conferring with Vyann stepped forward and spoke.

"We have certain tests we wish to carry out on the three of you," he said mildly. "You will shortly be called back here, priest. Meanwhile—guards, remove these prisoners to Cell Three, will you?"

The guards were prompt to obey. Despite protests from Fermour, he and Complain and Marapper were hustled out of the room and into another only a few yards down the corridor, where the door was shut on them. Marapper looked embarrassed, realizing that his recent attempt to extricate himself at their expense might have cost him a little goodwill; he began to try to retain his position by cheering them up.

"Well, well, my children," he said, extending his arms to them, "the Long Journey has always begun, as the scripture puts it. These people of Forwards are more civilized than we, and will certainly have a horrible fate awaiting us. Let me intone some last rite for you."

Complain turned away and sat down in a far corner of the room. Fermour did likewise. The priest followed them, squatting on his

you are what you claim, you will not be harmed—but some strange things emerge from Deadways, and must be guarded against. I understand you came here especially to bring us some information?"

"I have come a long way, through many decks," Marapper said, "and do not appreciate my reception now that I am here."

Master Scoyt inclined his head.

"What is this information you have?" he asked.

"I can divulge it only to the captain."

"Captain? What captain? The captain of the guard? There is no other captain."

This put Marapper in an awkward position, since he did not wish to use the word "ship" before the moment was ripe.

"Who is your superior?" he asked.

"Inspector Vyann and I answer only to the Council of Five," Scoyt said, with anger in his tone. "It is impossible for you to see the Council until we have assessed the importance of your information. Come, priest—other matters are on hand! Patience is an old-fashioned virtue I don't possess. What is this intelligence you set so much store by?"

Marapper hesitated. The moment was not ripe. Scoyt had risen almost as if to go, Vyann looked restless. All the same, he could hedge no more.

"This world," he began impressively, "all Forwards and Deadways to the far regions of Sternstairs is one body, the ship. And the ship is man-made, and moves in a medium called space. Of this I have proof." He paused to take in their expressions. Scoyt's was one of ambiguity. Marapper continued, explaining the ramifications of his theory with eloquence. He finished by saying, "If you will trust me, trust me and give me power, I will set this ship—for such you may be assured it is—at its destination, and we will all be free of it and its oppression forever."

the legend of it had faded—presumably because we were further from its supposed position than you. But it *must* exist! You have looked for it?"

Again Scoyt and Vyann looked at each other; Scoyt nodded in answer to an unspoken question.

"Since you appear to have stumbled on part of the secret," Vyann told Marapper, "we may as well tell you the whole of it. Understand this is not general knowledge even among the people of Forwards—we keep it to ourselves in case it causes madness and unrest. As the proverb has it, the truth never set anyone free. The ship is a ship, as you rightly say. There is no captain. The ship is plunging on, unguided through space, nonstop. We can only presume it is lost. We presume it will travel forever, till all aboard have made the Long Journey. It cannot be stopped—for though we have searched all Forwards for the Control Room, it does not exist!"

She was silent, looking at Marapper with sympathy as he digested this unpalatable information; it was too horrendous to accept.

". . . some terrible wrong of our forefathers," he murmured, drawing his right index finger superstitiously across his throat. Then he pulled himself together. "But at least the Control Room exists," he said. "Look, I have proof!"

From under his dirty tunic, he drew the book of circuit diagrams and waved it at them.

Now he spread the small book on the inspector's desk; the little bubble of the Control Room was clearly indicated at the front of the ship. As the other two stared, he explained how he had come by the book.

"This book was made by the Giants," he said. "They undoubtedly owned the ship."

"We know that much," Scoyt said. "But this book is valuable. Now we have a definite location to check for the Control Room. Come on,

them later. Inspector Vyann and I are testing this prisoner now.

For a moment, the councillor seemed to hesitate. Then he nodded and quietly withdrew. The priest, impressed, stared after him—and it was rarely the priest was impressed.

"That," Scoyt said for Marapper's benefit, "was Councillor Zac Deight, one of our Council of Five. Watch your manners in front of any of them, and particularly in front of Deight."

Vyann pocketed the priest's circuit book. They left the room in time to see the old councillor disappear around the curve of the corridor. Then began a long march toward the extremity of Forwards, where the diagram indicated the controls to be; it would have taken them several sleep-wakes to make the distance had it been uncharted and overgrown with ponics.

Marapper, engrossed though he was with future plans—for the discovery of the ship's controls would undoubtedly put him in a strong position—kept an interested eye on his surroundings. He soon realized that Forwards was far from being the wonderful place that Deadways' rumor painted, or that he had supposed at first sight. They passed many people, of whom a good proportion were children. Everyone wore less than in Quarters; the few clothes they had looked washed and neat, and the general standard of cleanliness was good, but bodies were lean, running to bone. Food was obviously short. Marapper surmised shrewdly that being less in contact with the tangles, Forwards could count on fewer hunters than Quarters, and those perhaps of inferior quality. He found also, as they progressed, that though all Forwards, from the barriers at Deck 24 to the dead end at Deck 1, was under Forwards' sway, only Decks 22 to 11 were occupied, and they but partially.

As they passed beyond Deck 11, the priest saw part of the explanation for this. For three entire decks, the lighting circuits had failed. Master

generations.

"Many strange things of which we have no knowledge happen in this ship," Scoyt said gloomily. "Ghosts are among us, working against us."

"Ghosts?" Marapper asked. "You believe in them, Master Scoyt?"

"What Roger means," Vyann said, "is that we are confronted with two problems here. There is the problem of the ship, where it is going, how it is to be stopped; that is the background problem, always with us. The other problem grows; it did not face our great-grandfathers: there is a strange race on this ship that was not here before."

The priest stared at her. She was glancing carefully into each doorway as they went by; Scoyt was being as cautious. He felt the hair on his neck bristle uncomfortably,

"You mean—the Outsiders?" he asked.

She nodded. "A supernatural race masquerading as men . . .," she said. "You know, better than we, that three quarters of the ship is jungle. In the hot muck of the tangles, somewhere, somehow, a new race has been born, masquerading as men. They are not men; they are enemies; they come in from their secret places to spy on us and kill us."

"We have to be always on the lookout," Scoyt said.

From then on, Marapper also looked in every doorway.

Now the layout changed. The three concentric corridors on each deck became two, their curvature sharpened. Deck 2 consisted of one corridor only with one ring of rooms around it, and in the middle the great hatch at the beginning of Main Corridor, sealed forever. Scoyt tapped it lightly.

"If this corridor, the only straight one in the ship, were

eroded than ever. As if his cheeks ached, he supported them with long fingers; they were not reassuring fingers; they could be cruel with artistry, although at present, resting against that haggard countenance, they seemed more the hands of a self-torturer.

"Expansion to you," he said heavily.

"Expansion," Complain replied. He knew he was to be tested, but most of his concern went on the fact that the girl Vyann was absent.

"I have some questions to ask you," Scoyt said. "It is advisable to answer them properly, for various reasons. First, where were you born?"

"In Quarters."

"That is what you call your village? Have you any brothers and sisters?"

"In Quarters we obeyed the Teaching," said Complain defiantly. "We do not recognize brothers and sisters after we are waist high to our mothers."

Without looking up, Scoyt said tiredly, "How many brothers and sisters would you have to recognize now if you did recognize them?"

"Only three sisters."

"No brothers?"

"There was one. He ran amok long ago."

"What proof have you you were born in Quarters?"

"Proof!" Complain echoed. "If you want proof, go and catch my mother. She still lives. She'd tell you all about it."

Scoyt stood up.

"Understand this," he said. "I haven't time to get civil answers out of you. Everyone on shipboard is in danger. It's a ship, you see, and it's headed nobody-knows-where, and it's old and creaking, and it's thick with phantoms and mysteries and riddles and pain . . ." He paused. More

answered Scoyt's questions. These mainly concerned their trek through Deadways; when Complain began to explain about his capture by the Giants, the investigator, noncommittal till now, pounced.

"The Giants do not exist!" he said. "They were extinct long ago. We inherited the ship from them."

Although openly skeptical, he then pressed as hard for details as Marapper once had, and it was obvious he slowly began to accept Complain's narrative for truth. His face clouded in thought, he tapped his long fingers on the desk.

"The Outsiders we have known for enemies," he said, "but the Giants we always regarded as our old allies, whose kingdom we took over with their approval. If they do still live somewhere in Deadways, why do they not show themselves—unless for a sinister reason? We already have quite enough trouble piled up against us."

As Complain pointed out, the Giants had not killed him when they might conveniently have done so; nor had they killed Ern Roffery, although what had become of the Valuer remained a mystery. In all, their role in affairs was ambiguous.

"I'm inclined to believe your tale, Complain," Scoyt said finally, "because from time to time we receive rumors— people swear they've seen Giants. Rumors! Rumors! We get our hands on nothing tangible. But at least the Giants seem to be no threat to Forwards—and best of all, they don't seem to be in alliance with the Outsiders. If we can tackle them separately, that'll be something."

He lapsed into silence, then asked, "How far is it to this sea where the Giants caught you?"

"Many decks away—perhaps forty."

Master Scoyt threw up his hands in disgust.

other door.

It led on to a side corridor. From one direction came the sound of voices; in the opposite direction, not many paces away, were—ponics. The way to them looked unguarded. His heart beating rapidly, Complain shut the door again, leaning against it to decide. Should he try to escape or not?

Marapper had been killed; there was no evidence he also would not be as coolly disposed of. It might well be wise to leave—but for where? Quarters was too far away for a solitary man to reach. But nearer tribes would welcome a hunter. Complain recalled that Vyann had mistaken his group for members of some tribe that was raiding Forwards; in his preoccupation with their capture, Complain had scarcely taken note of what she said, but it might well be the same band that was besieging the barricades now. They should appreciate a hunter with a slight knowledge of Forwards.

He swung his pack up on to his shoulder, opened the door, looked left and right, and dashed for the tangle.

All the other doors in the side corridor were shut, bar one. Instinctively, Complain glanced in as he passed—and stopped. He stood on the threshold, transfixed.

Lying on a couch just inside the room, relaxed as if sleeping, lay a body. It sprawled untidily, its legs crossed, its shabby cloak rolled up to serve as a pillow; its face won the melancholy expression of an overfed bulldog.

"Henry Marapper!" Complain exclaimed, eyes fixed on that familiar profile. The hair and temple were matted with blood. He leaned forward and gently touched the priest's arm. It was stone cold.

Instantly, the old mental atmosphere of Quarters clicked into place around Complain. The Teaching was almost as instinctive as a reflex. He

My parents were fugitives from their tribe. It was one of the little Midway tribes—smaller than Quarters."

"When did you join the Greene tribe?"

"After my parents died," Fermour said. "They had the trailing rot. By then I was full grown."

Scoyt's mouth, naturally heavy, had now elongated itself into a slit. A weapon had appeared, and was lightly balanced between Scoyt's hands. He began to pace up and down in front of Fermour, watching him closely.

"Have you any proof of all this stuff you tell me?" he asked.

Fermour was pale, tensed, incessantly twisting the heavy ring on his finger.

"What sort of proof?" he asked, dry-mouthed.

"Any sort. Anything about your origins we can check on. We aren't just a rag-taggle village in Deadways, Fermour. When you drift in from the tangles, we have to know who or what are you . . . Well?"

"Marapper the priest will vouch for me."

"Marapper's dead. Besides, I'm interested in someone who knew you as a child; anyone." He swung around so that they were face to face. "In short, Fermour, we want something you seem unable to give—proof that you're human!"

"How long have you been with the Greene tribe?" Scoyt continued.

"Oh, I lose track of time. Twice a hundred dozen sleep-wakes."

"We do not use your primitive method of calculating time in Forwards, Fermour. We call four sleep-wakes one day. That would make you stay with the tribe ... six hundred days. A long time in a man's life."

He stood looking at Fermour as if waiting for something. The door was pushed roughly open and a guard appeared on the threshold, panting.

"There's an attack at the barriers, Master Scoyt," he cried.

the stool away, he hurried through it, so vanishing from Complain's sight.
"He has gone, just as I went," Complain said, turning to brave the gray eyes again.

"My men will pick him up before he gets to the ponics," Vyann said carelessly. "I have little doubt your friend Fermour is an Outsider, but we shall be certain in a few minutes."

"Bob Fermour! He couldn't be!"

"We'll argue about that later," she said. "In the meantime, Roy Complain, you are a free man—as far as any of us are free. Since you have knowledge and experience, I hope you will help us attack some of our troubles."

His voice betraying his nervous excitement, Complain said, "I will help you in any way I can."

"Master Scoyt will be grateful," she said, moving away with a sudden sharpness in her voice. It brought him back to realities, and he asked with an equal sharpness what the Outsiders did that made them so feared; for though they had been dreaded by the Greene tribe, it was only because they were strange, and not like men.

"Isn't that enough?" she said. And then she told him of the powers of Outsiders. A few had been caught by Master Scoyt's various testing methods—and all but one had escaped. They had been thrown into cells bound hand and foot, and sometimes unconscious as well—there to vanish completely; if guards had been in the cells with them, they had been found unconscious without a mark on their bodies.

"And the Outsider who did not escape?" Complain asked.

"He died under torture on the presses. We got nothing from him, except that he came from the ponics."

She led him from the room. No longer did she appear as friendly as

creature shimmered with dirt, its hair restocked with dried mintex, its clothes torn.

He set, to work to change all that, grimly wondering what Vyann must have thought of such a barbarous figure. He scrubbed himself, put on clean clothes from his pack, and collapsed exhausted on the bed—exhausted, but unable to sleep; for at once his brain started racing.

Gweny had gone, Roffery had gone, Wantage, Marapper, now Fermour, had gone; Complain was on his own. The prospect of a new start offered itself—and the prospect was thrilling. Only the thought of Marapper's face, gleaming with unction and bonhomie, brought regret.

His mind was still churning when Master Scoyt arrived.

"Come and eat," he said simply.

Complain went with him, watching carefully to gauge the other's attitude toward him, but the investigator seemed too preoccupied to register any attitude at all. Then, looking up and catching Complain's eye on him, he said, "Well, your friend Fermour is proved an Outsider. When he was making for the ponics, he saw the body of your priest and kept straight on. Our sentries had an ambush for him and caught him easily."

Shaking his head impatiently at Complain's puzzled look, Scoyt explained, "He is not an ordinary human, bred in an ordinary part of the ship, otherwise he would have stopped automatically and made the genuflections of fear before the body of a friend; that ceremony is drummed into every human child from birth. It was that which finally convinced us you were human."

He sank back into silence until they reached the dining-hall, scarcely greeting the several men and women who spoke to him on the way. In the hall, a few officers were seated, eating. At a table of her own sat Vyann. Seeing her, Scoyt instantly brightened, went over to her and put a hand

Fermour was a friend, Complain said, using the first excuse for his unhappiness that entered his head.

"He was also an Outsider," Scoyt said heavily. "He exhibited all their characteristics. He was slow, rather on the weighty side, saying little—I'm beginning to be able to detect them as soon as I look at them."

"You're brilliant, Roger," Vyann said, laughing, and she put a hand over his affectionately.

Perhaps it was that which sparked Complain off. He flung his fork down.

"What about Marapper?—he was no alien and you killed him! Do you think I can forget that? Why should you expect any help from me after killing him?"

Waiting tensely for trouble to start, Complain could see other people turning from their meal to look at him. Scoyt opened his mouth and then shut it again, staring beyond Complain as a heavy hand fell on the latter's shoulder.

"Mourning for me is not only foolish but premature," a familiar voice said. "Still taking on the world singlehanded, eh, Roy?"

Complain turned, amazed, and there stood the priest, beaming, scowling, rubbing his hands. He clutched Marapper's arm incredulously.

"Yes, I, Roy, and no other: the great subconscious rejected me—and left me confoundedly cold. I hope your scheme worked, Master Scoyt?"

"Excellently, priest," Scoyt said. "Eat some of this indigestible food and explain yourself to your friend, so that he will look at us less angrily."

"You were dead!" Complain said.

"Only a short Journey," Marapper said, seating himself and stretching out for the ale jug. "This witch doctor, Master Scoyt here, thought up an uncomfortable way of testing you and Fermour. He painted my head

He works too hard," Vyann said, her eyes following him out of the hall. "We must all work hard. Before we sleep, you must be told our plans, for we shall be busy next wake."

"Ah," Marapper said eagerly, cleaning his bowl, "that is what I want to hear. You understand my interest in this whole matter is purely theological, but what I'd like to know is, what do I get out of it?"

"First we are going to exorcise the Outsiders," she smiled. "Suitably questioned, Fermour should yield up their secret hiding place. We go there and kill them, and then we are free to concentrate on unraveling the riddles of the ship."

This she said quickly, as if anxious to avoid questioning, and went on at once to usher them out of the dining-room and along several corridors. Marapper, now fully himself again, took the chance to tell Complain of their abortive search for the Control Room.

"So much has changed," Vyann complained. They were passing through a steel companionway whose double doors, now open, allowed egress from deck to deck. She indicated them lightly, saying: "These doors, for instance—in some places they are open, in some closed. And all the ones along Main Corridor are closed—which is fortunate, otherwise every marauder aboard ship would make straight for Forwards. But we cannot open or shut the doors at will, as the Giants must have been able to do when they owned the ship. As they stand now, so they have stood for generations; but *somewhere* must be a lever which controls them all. We are so helpless. We control nothing."

"Are you and Master Scoyt the only ones working on this problem?" Complain asked.

"For Hem's sake, no!" she said. "We're only subordinates. A group calling itself the Survival Team has recently been constituted, and it and

test has perished. What remains allows us only a fragment of the truth.

As the councillor began his narrative, Complain forgot the odd gestures with which he accompanied it. He forgot everything but the wonder of the tale as it had been pieced together, the mighty history patched up in this little room.

Through the space in which their world moved, other worlds also moved—two other sorts of worlds, one called "sun," from which sprang heat and light, one called "planet." The planets depended on the suns for heat and light. At one planet attached to a sun called "Sol" lived men; this planet was called "Earth" and the men lived all over the outside of it, because the inside was solid and had no light.

"The men did not fall off it, even when they lived on the bottom of it," Tregonnin explained. "For they had discovered a force called gravity. It is gravity which enables us to walk all the way around a circular deck without falling off."

Many other secrets the men discovered. They found a way to leave their planet and visit the other planets attached to their sun. This must have been a difficult secret, for it took them a long while. The other planets were different from theirs, and had either too little light and heat or too much. Because of this, there were no men living on them. This distressed the men of Earth.

Eventually they decided they would visit the planets of other suns, to see what they could find there, as their Earth was becoming exceptionally crowded. Here the scanty records in Tregonnin's possession became confusing, because while some said that space was very empty, others said it contained thousands of suns—stars, they were sometimes called.

For some lost reason, men found it hard to decide which sun to go to, but eventually, with the aid of instruments

wise man, Councillor, and I believe it all, every word of it. What power those men had, what power! I am only a poor old provincial priest, I know nothing, but . . ."

"Stop dramatizing yourself, man," Tregonnin said with unexpected severity. "Take your mind off your ego and concentrate on what I am telling you. Facts are the thing—facts, and not emotions!"

"You're used to the magnificence of the tale, I'm not," Marapper sobbed, unabashed. "To think of all that power . . ." Tregonnin put the globe carefully down and said in a petulant tone to Vyann, "Inspector, if this objectionable fellow doesn't stop sniffing, you will have to take him away. I cannot stand sniffing. You know I cannot."

"When do we get to this Procyon's planets?" asked Complain quickly. He could not bear the thought of leaving here till everything had been told him.

"A sound question, young man," Tregonnin said, looking at him for what was practically the first time. "And I'll try to give you a sound answer. It seems that the flight to Procyon's planets had two main objectives. The ship was made to carry a number of people called 'colonists.' These colonists were to land on the new planet and live there, increasing and multiplying; the ship transported machines for them—we have found inventories of some of the things—tractors, concrete mixers, pile-drivers—those are some of the names I recall.

"The second objective was to collect information on the new planet and samples from it, and bring it all back for the men of Earth to study."

In his jerky fashion, Councillor Tregonnin moved to a cupboard and fumbled about inside it. He brought out a metal rack containing a dozen round tins small enough to fit in a man's hand. He opened one. Crisp broken flakes like transparent nail parings fell out.

Wait! Complain said. You've told us so much, yet you've told us so little. If we are traveling back to Earth, when do we get there? How can we know?"

"My dear fellow," Tregonnin began, then sighed and changed his mind about what he was going to say. "My dear fellow, don't you see, so much has been destroyed . . . The answers aren't always clear. Sometimes even the *questions* have been lost, if you follow my meaning. Let me answer you like this: we know the distance from New Earth, as the colonists called it, to Earth; it is eleven light-years, as I have said. But we have not been able to find out how fast the ship is traveling."

"But one thing at least we do know," Vyann interposed. "Tell Roy Complain about the Forwards Roll, Councillor."

"Yes, I was just about to," Tregonnin said, with a touch of asperity. "Until we of the Council of Five took over command of Forwards, it was ruled by a succession of men calling themselves Governors. Under them, Forwards grew from a pitiful tribe to the powerful state it now is. Those Governors took care to hand down to each other a Roll or Testament, and this Roll or Testament the last Governor handed over to my keeping before he died. It is little more than a list of Governors' names. But under the *first* Governor's name it says," he shut his eyes and waved a delicate hand to help him recite, " 'I am the fourth homeward-bound captain of this ship, but since the title is only an irony now, I prefer to call myself Governor, if even that is not too grand a name.' "

The councillor opened his eyes and said, "So you see, although the names of the first three men are lost, we have in the Roll a record of how many generations have lived aboard this ship since it started back for Earth. The number is twenty-three."

Marapper had not spoken for a while. Now he asked, "Then that is a

giance up at the moray ceiling. Through the grime there, alert as if listening and understanding, peered a tiny rat's face.

common sense to do the same ourselves. And don't forget the Teaching tells you always to seek for yourself so that you may be freed from inner conflict."

"You're forgetting something," Complain said. "The Litany ends 'And the ship brought home'; it's one of the main tenets of the Teaching. You were always a shockingly bad priest, Marapper."

They were interrupted by the appearance of Vyann, looking fresh and attractive. She said she had already taken breakfast. With more irritation than he usually showed, Marapper excused himself. Something in Vyann's manner told Complain she was happy enough to let him go; it suited him well also.

"Has Fermour been questioned yet?" he asked.

"No. One of the Council of Five, Zac Deight, has seen him, but that's all. Roger—that is, Master Scoyt—will question him later, but at present he is involved with some other, unexpected business."

He did not ask what this business might be. Seeing her so close again overpowered him, so that he could hardly think of anything to say. Mainly, he longed to tell her that nothing less than a miracle could have arranged her dark hair as it was. Instead, and with an effort, he asked what he was required to do.

"You are going to relax," she said brightly. "I have come to show you around Forwards."

It proved an impressive tour. Many rooms, here as in Quarters, were barren and empty; Vyann explained that this must be because their contents had been left on Procyon's planet, New Earth. Others had been turned into farms far surpassing Quarters's in scale. There were varieties of animals Complain had never seen before. He saw fish for the first time, swimming in tanks—here Vyann told him that they yielded the white

ship go was produced. Many men must have worked here.

The doors which stood open along their way were doors with heavy wheels set in them, quite unlike the ordinary metal ship's doors. They passed through a last archway and were in a colossal chamber several floors high. The cone of the flashlight's beam picked out massed banks of strange shapes to either side, and in between, cumbrous structures on wheels, with grapnels and scoops and metal hands.

"Once it was alive: now it's all dead!" Vyann whispered. There was no echo here; the brutal undulations of metal sucked up every sound. "This is what the Control Room would control if we could find it."

They retreated, and Vyann led the way into another chamber much like the first, but smaller, though it too was enormous by ordinary standards. Here, though the dust was as thick, a deep and constant note filled the air.

"You see—the force is not dead!" the girl said. "It still lives behind these steel walls. Come and look here!"

She led into an adjoining room, almost filled with the gigantic bulk of a machine. The machine, completely paneled over, was shaped like three immense wheels set hub to hub, with a pipe many feet in diameter emerging from either side and curving up into bulkheads. At Vyann's behest, Complain set his hand on the pipe. It vibrated. In the side of one of the great wheels was an inspection panel; Vyann unlatched and opened it, and at once the organ note increased.

The girl shone her light into the aperture.

Complain stared, fascinated. Within the darkness, flickering and illusory, something spun and reflected the light, droning deeply as it did so. At the heart of it, a small pipe dripped liquid continually on to a whirling hub.

You must prove yourself before trying that sort of thing with me.

He tried to grab her, but in the darkness banged his head, whereupon she at once switched on the light. At his lack of success he was angry and sulky, turning away from her, rubbing his sore skull.

"Why did you bring me down here?" he asked. "Why be friendly to me at all?"

"You take the Teaching too seriously—it's what I might expect from someone out of a provincial tribe!" she said pettishly. Then, relenting a little, she said, "But come, don't look so cross. You need not think because someone shows friendliness they mean you harm. That old-fashioned idea is more worthy of your friend Priest Marapper."

Complain was not so easily teased out of his mood, especially as mention of Marapper's name recalled the priest's warning. He lapsed into a gloomy silence which Vyann was too haughty to break, and they made their way back rather dejectedly. Once or twice, Complain looked half-imploringly at her profile, willing her to speak. Finally she did—without looking at him.

"There was something I had to ask you," she said in a reluctant voice. "The lair of the Outsiders must be found; and a tribe of raiders has to be destroyed. Because our people are mainly agriculturalists, we have no hunters. Even our trained guards will not venture far into the tangles—certainly they could not cover the vast areas you did on your way here. Roy—we need you to lead us against our enemies. We hoped to show you enough to convince you they were your enemies too."

Now she was regarding Complain. She smiled kindly, plaintively.

"When you look at me like that, I could get out and walk to Earth!" he exclaimed.

"We shall not ask that of you," she said, still smiling, and for once

episode, one of Gregg's raiders had approached the barriers, calling for truce and begging to see someone in authority.

"I've got him in the next cell," Scoyt told Vyann and Complain. "He's a queer creature called Hawl, but beyond referring to his boss as 'the captain,' he seems sane enough."

"What does he want?" Vyann asked. "Is he a deserter?"

"Better even than that, Laur," Scoyt said. "This fight our scouts reported in Deadways was between Gregg's and another gang. Hawl won't say why, but the episode has seriously upset them. So much so that Gregg is suing for peace through this fellow Hawl, and wants to bring his tribe to live in Forwards for protection."

"It's a ruse!" Vyann exclaimed, "a trick to get in here!"

"No, I don't think so," Scoyt said. "Hawl is quite sincere. The only snag is that Gregg, knowing the sort of reputation he has with us, wants a Forwards official to go to him as a token of good faith to arrange terms. Whoever is chosen goes back with Hawl."

Two Forwards officers were with Hawl, supposedly guarding him. They had plainly been beating him with knotted ropes. Scoyt dismissed them sharply, but for some while could get no sense out of Hawl, who lay face down, groaning, until the offer of another thrashing made him sit up. He was a startling creature, as near a mutant as made no difference. Madarosis had left him completely hairless, so that neither beard nor eyebrows sprouted from his flesh; he was also toothless. Congenital deformity had given his face a crazed top-heaviness, for while he was so undershot that his upper gum hung in air, his forehead was so distended by exostosis that it all but hid his eyes. Yet Hawl's chief peculiarity was that these minor oddities were set above a normal-sized body on a skull no bigger than a man's two fists clenched one atop the other.

That your man will be told when he comes with me to arrange terms," he said. "Now I've said all I'm going to say, and you'll have to make up your minds whether you agree or not. But remember this—if we come here, we shall be no trouble. And we shall fight for you rather than against. This also we swear."

Scoyt and Vyann looked at each other.

"It's worth trying if we can get a foolhardy volunteer," he said.

"It'll have to go to the Council," she said.

Complain had not spoken yet, awaiting his opportunity. Now he addressed Hawl.

"This man you call captain," he said. "Has he another name than Gregg?"

"You can ask him that when you're arranging terms," Hawl repeated.

"Look at me carefully, fellow. Do I resemble your captain in any way? Answer."

The captain has a beard," Hawl said evasively.

"He should give it to you to cover your head with!"

Complain snapped. "What do you say to this then?—I had a brother who ran amok into Deadways long ago. His name was Gregg—Gregg Complain. Is that your captain, man?"

"To think the captain has a brother here in Forwards!" answered Hawl.

Complain turned excitedly to Master Scoyt, whose heavy face creased with surprise. "I volunteer to go with this man to Gregg," he said.

The suggestion suited Master Scoyt well. The full force of his persuasiveness, genial but relentless, was applied to the Council of Five, who convened at once under his direction; Tregonnin was urged reluctantly from the library, Zac Deight disentangled from a theological argument with Marapper, and Billyoe, Dupont, and Ruskin, the other three of the

orders.

"You got around them! You arranged it!" he said. He could see he guessed rightly, and was suddenly deliriously glad. Seizing her wrist, he asked, "What made you wish to come?"

The answer was not as flattering as he might have wished. Vyann had always wanted to hunt in the ponics, she said; this was the next best thing. And suddenly Complain was reminded—without pleasure—of Gwenny and her passion for the hunt.

"You'll have to behave yourself," he said severely, wishing her reason for joining him could have been more personal.

Marapper appeared before they left, seeking a word alone with Complain. He had found a mission in life: the people needed to be reconverted to the Teaching; since the more lenient rule of the Council had begun, the Teaching had lost its grip. Zac Deight in particular was against it—hence Marapper's argument with him.

"I don't like that man," the priest grumbled. "There's something horribly *sincere* about him."

"Don't stir up trouble here, please," Complain begged, "just when these people have come around to accepting us. Relax, Marapper. Stop being yourself!"

Marapper shook his head so sadly his cheeks wobbled.

"You also are falling among the unbelievers, Roy," he said. "I must stir up trouble: turmoil in the id—it must out! There lies our salvation, and of course if the people rally round me at the same time, so much the better. Ah, my friend, we have come so far together, only to find a girl to corrupt you."

"If you mean Vyann, priest," Complain said, "leave her out of this. I've warned you before, she's nothing to do with you."

much that he was willing to forsake his natural element for the unanimal disciplines of Forwards.

Having only two decks to cover, they were not long in the ponics. This, in Vyann's view at least, was all to the good; the tangles, she found, were not romantic; merely drab, irritating, and full of tiny black midges. She stopped gratefully when Hawl did, and peered ahead through the thinning stalks,

"I recognize this stretch!" Complain exclaimed. "It's near where Marapp and I were captured."

A black and ruinous length of corridor lay ahead, the walls pockmarked and scarred, the roof ripped wide with the force of some bygone explosion. It was here the explorers from Quarters had run into the eerie weightlessness. Hawl shone a light ahead and let out a fluttering whistle. Almost at once, a rope floated out of the hole in the roof.

"If you go and grab hold of that, they'll pull you up," Hawl said. "Just walk slowly to it and catch hold. It's simple enough."

It could, despite this reassurance, have been simpler. Vyann gave a gasp of alarm as the lightness seized her, but Complain, more prepared, took her waist and steadied her. Without too much loss of dignity, they got to the rope and were at once hauled up. They were hauled through the roof, and through the roof of the level above that—the damage had been extensive. Hawl, scorning the aid of ropes, dived up head first and landed nonchalantly before they did.

Four ragged men greeted them, crouched over a desultory game of Travel-Up. Vyann and Complain stood in a shattered room, still almost weightless. A miscellany of furniture was ranged around the hole from which they emerged, obviously acting as a shelter for anyone needing to guard the hole in the event of an attack. Complain expected to be

As he scanned them, his expression never changed. They might have been blocks of wood; he might have been a block of wood; the blood relationship meant nothing to him.

"You've come officially from Forwards?" he finally asked his younger brother.

"Yes," Complain said.

"You didn't take long to get yourself into their favor, did you?"

"What do you know of that?" Complain challenged. The surly independence of his brother had, from all appearances, grown stronger since his violent withdrawal from Quarters long ago.

"I know a lot of what goes on in Deadways," Gregg said. "I'm captain of Deadways, if nowhere else. I knew you were heading for Forwards. How I knew, never mind—let's get down to business. What did you bring a woman with you for?"

"As you said, let's get down to business," Complain said sharply.

"I suppose she's come to keep an eye on you to see that you behave yourself," Gregg muttered. "That seems a likely Forwards arrangement. You'd better follow me; there's too much moaning going on in here . . . Hawl, you come too. Davies, you're in charge here now—keep 'em quiet if you can."

Following Gregg's burly back, Complain and Vyann were led into a room of indescribable chaos. All over its scanty furnishings, rags and clothes had been tossed; redsoaked bandages lay over the floor. A remnant of manners still lurked in Gregg; seeing the look of distaste on Vyann's face, he apologized for the confusion.

"My woman was killed in the fight last night," he said. "She was torn to bits—I couldn't get to her. I just couldn't get to her. She'd have cleaned this up by now. Perhaps you'd like to do it for me?"

On, you know them, do you? Surprising . . . You know more than I credited you with. They're the menace, the rat packs, the biggest menace on the ship. They've learned to cooperate and attack in formation—that's what they did ast sleep when they fought us—that's why we're getting out. We wouldn't be able to beat them off again if they came in strength."

"This is extraordinary!" Vyann exclaimed. "We've had no such attacks in Forwards."

"Maybe not. Forwards is not the world," Gregg said grimly. He told them his theory: that the rat packs kept to Deadways because there they found the solitary humans whom they could attack and destroy without interference. Their latest raid was partly evidence of increasing organization, partly an accident because they had not at the outset realized the strength of Gregg's band. Deciding he had said enough, Gregg changed the subject abruptly.

His plans for coming into Forwards were simple, he said. He would retain his group, numbering about fifty, as an autonomous unit which would not mix with the people of Forwards; they would spend their wakes as they spent them now, skirmishing through Deadways, returning only for sleeps. They would be responsible for the guarding of Forwards from Outsiders, Giants, rats, and other raiders.

"And in return?" Complain asked.

"In return, I must keep the right to punish my own folk," Gregg said.

"And everyone must address me as Captain."

"Surely a rather childish stipulation?"

"You think so? You never knew what was good for you. I've got here in my possession an old diary which proves that I—and you, of course—are descended from a captain of this ship. His name was Captain Complain—Captain Gregory Complain. He owned the whole ship.

and a chance arrangement of closed interdeck doors had given his band a fortress only approachable through the gashed roof by which Complain and Vyann had entered. Still talking—and now beyond his habitual surliness were tokens that he felt some pleasure at the sight of his brother—Gregg burst into a cupboardlike room.

"Here's an old pal for you," he said, with a sweeping gesture of introduction.

The announcement left Complain unprepared for what he saw. On a rough and dirty couch lay Ern Roffery the Valuer. He was barely recognizable. Three fingers were missing, and half the flesh of his face; one eye was gone. Most of the superb mustache had been chewed away. It needed nobody to tell Complain that this was the work of the rats—he could see their teethmarks on a protruding cheekbone. The Valuer did not move.

"Shouldn't be surprised he's made the Journey," Gregg said carelessly.

He shook Roffery's shoulder roughly, raised his head, and let it drop back on to the pillow.

"Still warm—probably unconscious," he said. "But this'll show you what we're up against. We picked this hero up last wake, several decks away. He said the rats had finished him. It was from him I heard about you—he recognized me. Not a bad fellow."

"One of the best," Complain said. In a daze he stood there while his brother kept talking. The rats had picked Roffery up in the swimming pool; while he was still helpless from the effects of the Giants' gassing, they had loaded him on a sort of stretcher and dragged him to their warrens. And there he had been questioned, under torture.

The warren was between broken decks, out of a man's reach. It was packed with rats, and with an extraordinary variety of bric-a-brac they

not liquid. Only Hawn looked guilty and saw fit to explain that the bloody bandages had made her ill, so he had gone to get her a drink.

"There's a drop left for you, Captain," he added.

As Gregg drank, Complain started to go, still shaken by the sight of Roffery.

"We'll put your proposition to the Council," he said. "They should accept it when they hear about the rats. I'll come back and report to you what they say. Now we must get back; the next sleep-wake is a dark, and there is much to be done before that."

Gregg looked hard at his brother. Beneath the morose indifference of his expression, uneasiness stirred; undoubtedly he was anxious to get his band to Forwards as soon as possible. Perhaps he realized for the first time that his younger brother was a force to reckon with.

"Here's a present for you to take with you," he said clumsily, picking up something from the bed and thrusting it at Complain. "It's a sort of dazer I took off a Giant we speared two wakes back. It kills by heat. It's awkward to handle, and you'll burn yourself if you aren't careful, but it was a useful enough weapon against the rats."

The "sort of dazer" was a stubby metal object, as cumbrous as Gregg had said; he pressed the button, and a fan of almost invisible heat spread from the front. Even standing away from it, Complain could feel its heat, but its range was obviously short. Nevertheless, Complain accepted it gratefully, and he parted from his brother on an unexpectedly cordial note. It felt funny, he thought, to be pleased by a personal relationship like that.

Vyann and Complain made their way back to Forwards unescorted, the latter with more anxiety than when they had set out, keeping his senses alert for rats. They arrived safely, only to find Forwards in an uproar.

barriers. As they made for their own apartments, distant whistles could be heard; the corridors were almost empty—evidently most people had joined in the chase. A diversion was always as welcome in Forwards as it had been in Quarters.

Vyann breathed a sigh of relief.

"This gives us a lull," she said. "I didn't want to face the Council before I had talked to you. I don't know how you feel, but I'm sure of one thing; we can't have your brother's mob here—they'd be unmanageable."

Complain had known instinctively how she felt. Inclined to agree, he nevertheless said, "Do you feel happy about leaving them to the rats?"

"Gregg's deliberately overestimating the abilities of the rats, as a lever to get himself in here. If he's really so anxious about them he can move further into Deadways. He certainly can't come here: our organization would collapse."

Vyann had the stubborn look about her mouth again. She was so self-possessed that a wave of rebellion ran through Complain. Catching the defiance in his eyes, Vyann smiled slightly and said, "Come into my room and talk, Roy."

It was an apartment much like Complain's, rather bare, except for a bright rug on the floor. Vyann shut the door behind them and said, "I shall have to recommend to Roger and the Council that we keep Gregg out at all costs. You may have noticed that half his men had some sort of deformity; I suppose he has to pick what recruits he can from the freaks of Deadways, but we can't possibly allow them here."

"He has more knowledge of that area of the ship than anyone here," Complain said, stung by the contempt in her voice. "For any forays into the ponics he'd be invaluable."

She waved a hand gently, bringing it to rest on his arm.

Come and see what I've got to show you—something intriguing. With any luck it will tell us a great deal we need to know about the ship."

Vyann was back to business; it took Complain somewhat longer to recover. She sat down on the bed. As Complain sat beside her, she unbuttoned her tunic and pulled out a narrow black book, handing it to him.

"It was written by an ancestor of yours. I stole it from Gregg's locker when I had sent Hawl out to get me a drink. It's the diary of Gregory Complain, sometime captain of this ship."

The instinct which prompted Vyann to steal the diary was a sure one; although the entries were comparatively few, the vistas they opened up came like a revelation. Because Vyann read more quickly than he, Complain soon gave up, lying with his head in her lap as she read aloud.

At first the account was difficult to follow, by virtue of its reference to things of which Vyann and Complain had no knowledge; but they soon grew to understand the alarming predicament in which the writer of the diary and his contemporaries had found themselves. That ancient crisis seemed suddenly very near, although it had happened so long ago; for Captain Gregory—as Vyann soon discovered—had been the first captain on the ship's journey home from Procyon V.

An illuminating entry occurred only a few pages after the diary began:

28.xi.2521. More trouble. Watkins, I/C Floriculture was up to see me after morning watch. He reports that the chlorosis afflicting many species of plants is no better, despite constant iron treatments. Advance spectrum output has been increased two degrees. Lt. Stover—I understand the ratings call him "Noah"—was up shortly afterwards. He is I/C Animal Insemination, and is no happier about his lower animals than Watkins is about his higher plants. Apparently the mice are breeding at a

dosages evidently did the trick. Less cheer from Noah Stover—they have a lot of sick animals on their hands.

2.xii.2521. We are now on full acceleration. The long journey home may be said to have begun in earnest: as if anyone felt excited. Morale is low ... Yvonne and Frank are being splendid, partly, I suppose, to try and forget that Joy—so recently our baby girl!—is now several a.u.'s behind. A No-More-Procreation Club has been formed in crew's quarters, I am told by Internal Relations; the basic human drives can cope with that one, I think. More difficult to deal with is poor Bassitt. . . He was an Aviarist 2d Class, but now that all birds except a handful of sparrows have been released on the New World, time hangs heavy for him. He has evolved a dismal religion out of old psychology textbooks, which he insists on preaching up and down Main Corridor.

Amazing thing is, people seem inclined to listen. Sign of the times, I suppose. These are minor matters. I was about to deal with a more serious one—the animals—when I was called. More later.

5.xii.2521. A curse has fallen upon us! Hardly an animal aboard ship is now on its feet, many are dead. The rest lie stiffly with eyes glazed, occasional muscular spasms providing their only sign of life. The head of Fauniculture, Distaff—who went to school with me—is sick, but his underlings and Noah are doing good work. Drugs, however, seem ineffective on the suffering creatures. If only they could talk! Agritechnics are cooperating full blast with the Laboratory Deck, trying to find what plague has descended on us. Curse of God, I say! . . . All this is grist for Bassitt's mill, of course.

10.xii.2521. Among the stack of routine reports on my desk every morning is the sick report. On the 8th there were 9 sick, yesterday 19, today 41—and a request, which I hardly needed, from Senior M. O.

assured me, they were recovering. The sickness lasted a week, for the last two days, the patients were relaxed, although still running temperatures; 3 spoke up intelligently and said they felt better, the other 6 seemed delirious. The deaths occurred quietly, without struggle. Laboratory Deck has post-mortems on hand, Sheila Simpson is the only survivor of this first batch, a girl of thirteen; her temperature is lower, she may live.

The nine-day cycle will be up for 10 more cases tomorrow. Infinite foreboding fills me.

One hundred and eighty-eight people are now in bed, many lying in their respective rooms, the sick bay being full. Power staff are being drafted as orderlies. Bassitt in demand! A deputation of twenty officers, all very respectful, and headed by Watkins, came to see me after lunch; they requested that we turn back to New Earth before it is too late. Of course I had to dissuade them; poor Cruikshank of Ship's Press was among them—his son was one of the 8 who died this morning.

18.xii.2521. Could not sleep. Frank was taken early this morning, dear lad. He lies as rigid as a corpse, staring at— what? Yet he was only 1 of 20 new cases; the older people are getting it now. Have been forced to modify the ship's routine: another few days and it must be abandoned altogether. Thank heaven most devices are automatic and self-servicing.

Of the 10 patients whose nine-day cycle finished today, 7 have died. The other 3 remain on the threshold of consciousness. No change in young Sheila. All anyone talks about now is what is called the "Nine Day Ague." Had Bassitt put in the cells on a charge of spreading depression.

I am tired after a prolonged inspection of Agriculture with, among others, Watkins, who was rather stiff after the failure of his deputation yesterday. Ninety-five per cent of all livestock took the Ague, Noah tells me. About 45 per cent of those recovered—wish human figures looked

down with the Ague, and a woman called Payne is trying to run things.

21.xii.2521. I have left the Control Room—perhaps for good. The shutters have been closed against the stars.

Gloom lies thick over the ship. Over half our population has the Nine Day Ague; out of 66 who have completed the full cycle, 46 have died. The percentage of deaths is dropping daily, but the survivors seem comatose. Sheila Simpson, for instance, hardly stirs.

Managing any sort of organization becomes increasingly hard. Contact with further parts of the ship is virtually lost, since all the switchboard team has the Ague. Everywhere, groups of men and women huddle together, waiting. Licentiousness vies with apathy for upper hand. I have visions of us all dying, this dreadful tomb speeding on perhaps for millennia until it is captured by a sun.

Research now knows the cause of the Ague; somehow it seems of small importance. The knowledge comes too late. For what it is worth, here are their findings: Before leaving the new planet, we completely rewatered. All stocks of water aboard were evacuated into orbit, and fresh supplies ferried up. The automatic processes which claim moisture from the air and feed it back into the hull tanks have always been efficient; but naturally such water, used over and over, had become insipid.

The fresh water, ferried up from the streams of New Earth, tasted good. It had, of course, been tested for microscopic life and filtered; but perhaps we were not as thorough as we should have been—scientific method has naturally stagnated over the generations. However, apportioning blame is irrelevant in our present extremity. In simple terms, proteins were suspended in the water in molecular solutions, and so slipped through our filters.

June Payne explained the whole chain of events to me. Proteins are

By now, the settlement must be in as bad a state as we. At least they have the privilege of dying in the open air.

22.xii.2521. I had no time to finish yesterday. Today there seems to be all the time in the world. Fourteen more deaths reported this morning. The Nine Day Ague is undisputed master of the ship: my dear Yvonne is its latest victim. I have tucked her in bed but cannot look at her—too terrible. I have ceased to pray.

Let me finish what young Payne told me. She was guardedly optimistic about the ultimate survival of a percentage of pur population. The bodies of Ague victims are inactive while their internal forces cope with the overcomplex proteins; they will eventually break them down if the constitution concerned is elastic enough: "Another little protein won't do us any harm," Miss Payne quotes. Proteins are present already in all living cells and, after a danger period, another protein, differing but slightly, may be tolerated. The new amino, christened *payning* (this young creature smoothly informs me!) has been isolated; like leucine and lysine, which are already known, it has an effect on growth—what effect, only long-term research will establish, and I doubt that we have that much time.

The short-term results are before us. The plants have mainly adapted and, once adapted, seem to thrive. The animals, varying with their species, have adapted, though only the pig colony actually seems exuberant. All survivals, Payne says, may be regarded as mutations—what she calls "low-level mutations." It seems the heat in Agriculture may have helped them; so I have ordered a 10-degree temperature increase from Inboard Power for the whole ship. That is literally the only step we have been able to take. . . .

24.xii.2521. Toynbee has the Ague. So has Montgomery. They are 2 of only 5 new victims this morning. The freak proteins seem to have done the worst of their work. Trying to analyze the reports sick bay still

with the few hand-atomic weapons not landed, killing six of their companions and causing severe damage amidships. Strangely enough, they weren't after me! I had them disarmed and thrown into the brig—it will give Bassitt someone to preach at. And all weapons apart from the neurolethea, or "dazers" as they are popularly called, have been collected and destroyed to prevent further menace to the ship; the dazers, acting only on living nervous systems, have no effect on inorganic material.

25.xii.2521. Another attempt at mutiny. I was down in Agriculture when it all blew up. As one of the essential ship's services, the farm must be kept running at all costs. The oxygenators in Hydroponics have been left, as they can manage themselves; one of them, the dry variety mentioned before, has proliferated over the floor and seems almost as if it could sustain itself. While I was looking at it, Noah Stover came in with a dazer, a lot of worried young women with him. He fired a mild charge at me.

When I revived, they had carried me up into the Control Room, there threatening me with death if I did not turn the ship around and head back for New Earth! It took some time to make them understand that the maneuver of deflecting the ship through 180 degrees when it is traveling at its present speed of roughly 1328.5 times EV (Earth Velocity) would take about five years. Finally, by demonstrating stream factors on paper, I made them understand; then they were so frustrated they were going to kill me anyhow.

Who saved me? Not my other officers, I regret to tell, but June Payne, single-handed—my little heroine from Research! So furiously did she rant at them that they finally slunk off, Noah in the lead. I can hear them now, rampaging around the low-number decks. They've got at the liquor supplies.

tomorrow.

27.xii.2521. Found two junior officers, John Hall and Margaret Prestellan, to accompany me around the ship. Men very orderly. Noah running a nursing service to feed those who come out of the Nine Day Ague. What will the long-term repercussions of this catastrophe be?

Someone has let Bassitt loose. He is raving mad—and yet compelling. I could almost believe his teaching myself. In this morgue, it is easier to put faith in psychoanalysis than God.

We went down to Agriculture. It's a shambles, the livestock loose among the crops. And the hydroponics! The dry oxygenator mentioned here before has wildly mutated under the paynine influence. It has invaded the corridors near the Hydroponics section, its root system sweeping a supply of soil before it, almost as if the plant had developed an intelligence of its own. With somewhat absurd visions of the thing growing and choking the whole ship, I went up to the Control Room and flung the lever which closes the interdeck doors all along Main Corridor. That should cramp the plant's style.

Frank broke out of his stiffness today. He did not recognize me; I will see him again tomorrow.

June was taken with the Ague today. Bright and living June! Prestellan showed her to me—motionless in suffering even as she had predicted. Somehow, treacherously, the sight of her hurt me more than the sight of Yvonne had done. I wish—but what does it matter what I wish? **MY TURN NEXT.**

28.xii.2521. Prestellan reminded me that Christmas has come and gone; I had forgotten. That was what the drunken mutineers were celebrating, poor devils!

Frank recognized me today; I could tell by his eyes, although he

There the diary ended.

During the reading, Vyann had been forced to pause several times and master her voice. Her usual bearing had deserted her, leaving her a girl close to tears. And when she had finished, she forced herself to turn back and reread a sentence on the first page which had escaped Complain's notice. In the spiky writing of Captain Gregory Complain were the words: "We head for Earth in the knowledge that the men who will see those skies will not be born until six generations have died." Vyann read it aloud in a shaky voice before finally breaking into a storm of tears.

"Don't you see!" she cried. "Oh, Roy—the journey was only meant to take seven generations! And we are the twenty-third generation! The *twenty-third*! We must be far past Earth—nothing can ever save us now."

Hopelessly, wordlessly, Complain tried to console her, but human love had no power to soften the inhumanity of the trap they were in. At last, when Vyann's sobbing had partly subsided, Complain began to talk. He could hear his voice creaking with numbness, forced out in an attempt to distract her—to distract both of them—from the basic plight.

"This diary explains so much, Laur," he said. "We must try and be grateful for knowing. Above all, it explains the catastrophe; it's not a frightening legend any more, it's something we might be able to deal with. Perhaps we shall never know if Captain Gregory survived, but his son must have, to carry on the name. Perhaps June Payne survived—somehow she reminds me of you. ... At least it's obvious enough people survived—little groups, forming tribes. . . . And by then the hydroponics had almost filled the ship."

"Who would have thought," she whispered, "that the ponics weren't really meant to be there. They're—they're part of the natural order of things! It seems so—"

through it, they could see the corridor.

"We must tell the Council," Complain said finally, in an awed voice.

"Wait!" she said. "Roy, darling, there's somewhere I want us to try that weapon. Will you come with me before we say a word to anyone?"

They found, with some surprise, when they got into the corridors, that the hunt for the Giant was still on. It was fast approaching the time when the darkness that would cover the next sleep-wake would fall; everyone not engaged in the hunt was preparing for sleep, behind closed doors. The ship seemed deserted, looking as it must have long ago, when half its occupants lay dying under the rule of the Nine Day Ague. Vyann and Complain hurried along unnoticed. When the dark came down, the girl flashed on the light at her belt without comment.

Complain could only admire her refusal to admit defeat; he was not enough of a self-analyst to see it was a quality he had a fair measure of himself. The uneasy notion that they might meet rats or Giants or Outsiders obsessed him, and he kept the heat gun ready in one hand and his dazer in the other. But their progress was uneventful, and they came safely to Deck 1 and the closed spiral staircase.

"According to your friend Marapper's plan," Vyann said, "the Control Room should be at the top of these stairs. On the plan, the Control Room is shown large; yet at the top there is only a small room with featureless circular walls. Supposing those walls have been put up to keep people out of the Control Room?"

"You mean—by Captain Gregory?"

"Not necessarily. Probably by someone later," she said. "Come and aim your gun at the walls. . . ."

They climbed the enclosed stairs and faced the circle of metal walls, with a hushed sensation of confronting a mystery. Vyann's grip on his

drove Complain and the girl, as surely as ponies seek light.

Through the narrow chink, which continued almost from ground level to far above their heads, they could glimpse a ribbon of space. How many pointless years had passed since the last inhabitant of the ship had looked out at that mighty void? Heads together, Complain and the girl stared through the impervious hyaline tungsten of the window, trying to take in what they saw. Little, of course, could be seen, just a tiny wedge of universe with its due proportion of stars— not enough to dizzy them, only enough to fill them with courage and hope.

"What does it matter if the ship is past Earth?" Vyann breathed. "We have found the controls! When we have learned how to use them, we can steer the ship to the first planets we come to—Tregonnin told us most suns have planets. Oh, we can do it! I *know* we can! After this, the rest will be easy!"

In the faint light, she saw a far-off gleam in Complain's eyes, a look of dumb-struck speculation. She put her arms around him, suddenly anxious to protect him as she had always protected Scoyt; for the independence so unremittingly fostered in Quarters had momentarily left Complain.

"For the first time," he said, "I've realized—fully realized—that we are on a ship." His legs were like water.

It was as if she interpreted the words as a personal challenge.

"Your ancestor brought the ship from New Earth," she said. "You shall land it on a Newer Earth!"

And she flicked on her light and swung its beam eagerly around the great array of controls, which up till now had remained in darkness. The phalanx on phalanx of dials which had once made this chamber the nerve center of the ship, the soldier-like parade of indicators, levers, knobs, and screens, which together provided the outward signs of the power still

against the time when the Council of Five should be reconstituted as the Council of Six—Marapper, of course, visualizing himself as the sixth councillor. He walked now through the dimness warily, half-afraid a Giant might pop up in front of him.

Which was almost exactly what happened.

A door ahead of him was flung open, a wash of illumination pouring into the corridor. Startled, Marapper shrank back. The light flapped and churned, transforming shadows into frightened bats as the bearer of the light hustled about his nocturnal business in the room. Next moment, two great figures emerged, bearing between them a smaller figure, who slumped as if ill. Undoubtedly, these were Giants: they were over six feet high.

The light, of exceptional brilliance, was worn as a fitting on one Giant's head; it sent the uneasy shadows scattering as its wearer bent and half-carried the small figure. They went only half a dozen places down the corridor before stopping in the middle of it, kneeling there with their faces away from Marapper. And now the light fell upon the face of the smaller man. It was Fermour!

With a word to the Giants, Fermour, leaning forward, put his knuckles to the deck in a curious gesture. His hand, fingertips upward, was for a moment caught alone in the cone of light; then a section of deck, responding to his pressure, rose and seized by the Giants, lifted to reveal a large manhole. The Giants helped Fermour into it, climbed down themselves, and closed the hatch over their heads. The glow from a square pilot light on the wall was again the only illumination in a deserted corridor.

Then Marapper found his tongue.

"Help!" he bellowed. "Help! They're after me!"

exit. It was a hair-line crack, hardly noticeable. Inside the rectangle at one end was a curious octagonal indentation, not half an inch across; apart from that, there was nothing to distinguish the trapdoor from the rest of the deck.

Two men tried to lever open the trapdoor, but the crack was so fine they could do no more than poke their fingernails down it.

"It won't come up, sir," one of the men said.

"Thank Hem for that!" Marapper exclaimed, visualizing a stream of Giants emerging upon them.

By this time, somebody had brought Scoyt. The Master's face was hard set; his long fingers restlessly caressed the runnels of his cheek as he listened to Marapper. Though he looked tired, he revealed that his brain was the widest awake of those present.

"You see what this means," he said. "These traps are set in the floor about a hundred paces apart throughout the

ship; we've never recognized them as such because we could never open them, but the Giants can open them easily enough. We no longer need doubt, whatever we once thought to the contrary, that the Giants still exist. For reasons of their own they're coming back—and for what other purpose than to take over the ship again?"

"But this trap . . ." Marapper said.

"This trap," Scoyt interrupted, "is the key to the whole matter. Do you remember when your friend Complain was captured by Giants he said he was spirited into a hole and traveled in a low, confined space that sounded like no part of the ship we knew? Obviously, it was a space between decks, and he was taken down a trap just like this one. All traps must intercommunicate—and if the Giants can open one, they can open them all!"

On the contrary, Councillor Billyoe, he said distinctly, "this matter affects every man on board. Everyone must know about it as quickly as possible. I'm afraid we are being swept to a time of crisis,"

Although he was contradicting the Council, Scoyt's face bore such a heavy look of pain that Billyoe avoided making an issue of the matter. Instead he asked, "Why do you say a crisis?"

Scoyt spread his hands.

"Look at it this way," he said. "A Giant suddenly appears on Deck 14 and ties up the first girl he finds in such a way that she escapes in no time. Why? So that an alarm could be given. Later he appears again down on the Drive Floors—at little risk to himself, let me add, because he can duck down one of these traps whenever he feels like it! Now; from time to time, we've had reports of sightings of Giants, but obviously in those cases the meeting was completely accidental; in this case, it looks as if it was not. For the first time, a Giant *wanted* himself to be seen; you can't explain the pointless tying-up of the girl otherwise."

"But *why* should he want to be seen and hunted?" Councillor Ruskin asked plaintively.

"I can see why, Councillor," said Marapper. "The Giant wanted to create a diversion while these other Giants rescued Fermour from his cell."

"Exactly," agreed Scoyt, without pleasure. "This all happened just as we began to question Fermour; we had scarcely started to soften him up. It was a ruse to get everyone out of the way while the Giants helped Fermour to escape. Now that the Giants know *we* know they are about, they'll be forced to do something—unless we do something first! Priest Marapper, get down on your hands and knees and show me exactly what you think it was that Fermour did to make the trapdoor open."

Puffing, Marapper got down as directed. Every light present

Back to him echoed the voice of the priest. "We are the sons of cowards, our days are passed in fear. . . . The Long Journey has always begun: let us rage while we can, and by so discharging our morbid impulses we may be freed from inner conflict. . . ." Instinctively, Complain made the formal gesture of rage. He let the anger steam up from the recesses of his misery and warm him in the withering darkness. Vyann had begun to weep on his shoulder; that she should suffer too added fuel to his fury.

He foamed it all up inside him with increasing excitement, distorting his face, calling up all the injuries he and everyone else had ever undergone, churning them together like batter in a bowl. Muddy, bloody anger, keeping his heart a-beat.

After that, feeling much saner, he was able to comfort Vyann and lead her back to the regions of her own people.

As they approached the inhabited part, a curious clanging grew louder in their ears. It was an odd noise without rhythm, an ominous noise, at the sound of which they increased their pace, glancing at each other anxiously.

Almost the first person they met, a man of the farmer class, came up quickly to them.

"Inspector Vyann," he said, "Master Scoyt is looking for you; he's been shouting everywhere!"

"It sounds as if he's pulling the ship apart for us," Vyann said wryly. "We're on our way, thank you."

They quickened their step, and so came upon Scoyt at Deck 20, from which Fermour had been rescued. A squad of men was pacing along the corridor, bending every so often and opening a series of traps in the deck. The heavy covers, flung aside, accounted for the strange clanging Vyann and Complain had heard. As each hole was revealed, a man was left to

relaxing slightly.

"Better than I dared hope," he said. "We will send scouts to get Gregg's party here as soon as possible. It is expedient that they move in here at once."

"No, Roger," Vyann said quickly. "They can't come here. With all respects to Roy, his brother's nothing but a brigand! His followers are nothing but a mob. They and their wives are maimed and mutated. The whole pack would bring endless trouble on to our hands if we had them living with us. They are absolutely no good for anything but fighting."

"*That*," Scoyt said grimly, "is just what we want them for. You'd better get abreast of events, Laur." Rapidly, he told her what Marapper had seen and what was now going on.

"Had you hurt Fermour?" Complain asked.

"No—just a preliminary flogging to soften him up."

"He was used to that sort of thing in Quarters, poor devil," Complain said. His own back tingled in sympathetic memory.

"Why should all this make it so urgent to get Gregg here?" Vyann said.

Master Scoyt sighed heavily and answered with emphasis.

"Because," he said, "here we have for the first time incontestable proof that the Outsiders and the Giants are in alliance—against us!"

He looked at them hard as this soaked in. "Nice position we're in, eh?" he said ironically. "That's why I'm going to have up every trap in the ship, and a man posted by it. Eventually we'll hunt the enemy out; I swear I won't rest till we do."

Complain whistled. "You'll certainly need Gregg's ruffians; manpower will be the crucial problem," he said. "But just how did Marapper manage to open that trapdoor?"

"We think all Outsiders may wear them," Scoyt said. "If so, it explains how easily they elude us. It explains a lot —although it doesn't explain how in the past they've managed to spirit themselves out of cells carefully guarded on the outside. On the assumption that all who wear these rings are our enemies, I've got some of the Survival Team working through the entire population, looking for the giveaway. Anyone caught wearing that ring makes the Journey! Now I must go. Expansions!"

He ushered them back into the clanging corridor. At once he was surrounded by underlings wanting orders; he became gradually separated from Complain and Vyann. They heard him delegating a junior officer to bear the news to Gregg, then he turned away and his voice was lost.

"Union with Gregg . . ." Vyann said, and shivered. "Now what do we do? It looks as if Roger intends to give me no more work."

"You're going to bed," Complain said. "You look exhausted."

"You don't think I could sleep with all this noise going on, do you?" she asked, smiling rather tiredly.

"I think you could try."

He was surprised with what submissiveness she let him lead her away, although she stiffened suddenly as they met Marapper loitering in a side corridor.

"You are the hero of the hour, priest, I understand," she said.

Marapper's face was ponderous with gloom; he wore injury around him like a cloak.

"Inspector," he said with a bitter dignity. "You are taunting me. For half my wretched lifetime I go around with a priceless secret on my finger without realizing it. And then when I do realize it—behold, in a moment of quite uncharacteristic panic, I give it away to your friend Scoyt for nothing!"

something he had promised himself as a kid without finding it, the something he could never put into words, the something too big to visualize ...

"Who's that?" he asked, roused suddenly by a close footstep.

A square pilot light near at hand revealed a tall man robed in white, a distinctive figure whose voice, when he spoke, was powerful and slow.

"I am Councillor Zac Deight," he said. "Don't be startled. You are Roy Complain, the hunter from Deadways, are you not?"

Complain took in his melancholy face and white hair, and liked the man instinctively. Instinct is not always the ally of intelligence.

"I am, sir," he answered.

"Your priest, Henry Marapper, spoke highly of you."

"Did he, by Hem?" Marapper often did good by stealth, but it was invariably to himself.

"He did," Zac Deight said. Then his tone changed. "I believe you might know something about that hole I see in the corridor wall."

He pointed at the gap Complain and Vyann had made earlier in the wall of her room.

"Yes I do. It was made with this weapon here," Complain said, showing the weapon to the old councillor and wondering what was coming next.

"Have you told anyone else you have this?" Zac Deight asked, turning the heat gun over with interest.

"No. Only Laur—Inspector Vyann knows; she's asleep at present."

"It should have been handed to the Council for us to make the best use of we could," Zac Deight said gently. "You ought to have realized that. Will you come to my room and tell me all about it?"

"Well, there's not much to tell, sir.. . ." Complain began.

the time when he had first stood close to Vyain, watching through a spyhole when Scoyt left Fermour alone in the interrogation room; Fermour had jumped on to a stool and tried to reach the ceiling that way. Now supposing. . . .

He swung the bed into the center of the room, tossed a locker on top of it and climbed rapidly up to examine the grille. It was similar to every other grille in every other room of the ship; three feet square, latticed with thin bars widely enough spaced to allow a finger to be poked between them. The exploring flashlight revealed these spaces to be silted up with dust; such breeze as drained through into the room was faint indeed.

Complain heaved tentatively at the grille. It did not budge.

It had to budge. Here, if the grilles opened, would be an explanation of the way some of Scoyt's previously captured Outsiders had escaped from guarded cells. Complain stuck his fingers through the grille and felt along its inner edge, hope and fear scampering coldly through his veins.

His index finger soon met with a simple, tongued catch. Complain flipped it over. Similar catches lay on the upper surface of the other three sides of the grille. One by one, he flicked them over. The grille lifted up easily; Complain angled it sideways, brought it down, and put it quietly on the bed. His heart beat rapidly.

Catching hold of the aperture, he drew himself up.

There was hardly space to stir. He had expected to find himself in the inspectionways; instead he was in the ventilation system. He guessed immediately that this pipe ran through the strange interdeck world of the inspectionways. Clicking his light off, he strained his eyes down the low duct, ignoring the breeze that sighed continuously in his face.

One light only lit the tunnel, filtering up from the next grating along. Struck with the idea that he must look much like a cork in a bottle,

the octagonal stone on Zac Deight's finger, and began to wonder what ghastly web of intrigue he had blundered into.

Deight was speaking again. "I had the chance of slipping into Vyann's room," he said, "while your diversion down on the Drive Floors was in full swing. And there I found something else the dizzies have got hold of: a diary we never knew existed, written by the first man to captain the ship on the way back from Procyon V. It contains far more than the dizzies should know; it'll set them questioning all sorts of things. By a stroke of luck, I have managed to get both diary and welder into my possession . . . Thanks. Even more luckily, nobody but Complain and this girl Vyann yet knows anything about—or realizes the significance of—either diary or welder. Now then, I know all about Little Dog's ideas on the sanctity of dizzy lives, but they're not up here coping with this problem, and it's getting more difficult hour by hour—if they want their precious secret kept, there is one easy way to do it. I've got Complain locked in next door to me now ... Of course not, no force; he just walked into the trap. Vyann is asleep in her room. What I'm asking you is this, Curtis: I want your sanction to kill Complain and Vyann ... I don't like it either, but it's the only way we can possibly retain the *status quo*, and I'm prepared to do it now before it's too late. . . ."

Zac Deight was silent, listening, an expression of impatience creeping over his long face.

"There isn't time to radio Little Dog," he said, evidently interrupting the speaker. "They'd procrastinate too long. You're in charge up here, Curtis, and all I need is your permission. . . . That's better. . . . Yes, I do consider it imperative. You don't think I enjoy the task? I shall gas them both through the air vents of their rooms. At least we know it's painless."

He hung up. He pushed the cupboard back into place. He stood for

rats seem to be able to understand them. ... Perhaps these moths are sort of airborne scouts for the rat-hordes!

This notion scared him a great deal more than hearing Deight pronounce his death sentence had done.

In a sweat of panic, he flicked back the four tongues which kept Zac Deight's grille in place, slithered the grille along the duct and dropped down into the councillor's room. Pulling up a table, he climbed on to it and moved the grille back into its proper position. Then he felt safer.

Zac Deight was not dead: Complain's dazer had been turned only to half-power; but he had been at close enough range to receive a shock of sufficient strength to keep him senseless for some while. He looked harmless, even benevolent, huddled on the deck with hair fallen over his ashen forehead. Complain took the councillor's keys, collected his heat gun, unlocked the door, and let himself out into the silent corridor.

At the last moment he paused, turning back into the room to flash his light up at the grille. Sharp little pink hands grasped the bars, a dozen sharp faces hated down at him. Hair prickling up his neck, Complain gave them the daze. The little burning eyes lost their brilliance at once, the pink hands relaxed their grip.

Squeals following him down the corridor told Complain he had also concealed winged reinforcements.

His ideas flowed fast as he walked. One thing he stubbornly determined: Councillor Deight's role in this affair, and all that he had said on the strange instrument to Curtis (where *was* Curtis?) should be mentioned to nobody until he had discussed it with Vyann. They could no longer tell who was on their side and who was not.

A practical item worried Complain, but he could not quite formulate it. It had something to do with the rescue of Fermour . . . No, it would

Forwards, that thin animated gaggle of squalor was greeted with welcoming smiles and an occasional cheer. The tattered legion waved back. Roffery had been left behind; he was considered near enough dead to make any trouble expended on his account worthless.

One thing at least was clear: the outcasts, wounded though many of them were from their encounter with the rats, were prepared to fight. Every man was loaded down with dazers, knives, and improvised pikes.

Gregg himself, accompanied by his weird henchman, Hawl, was conferring with Scoyt and Councillor Ruskin behind a closed door when Complain arrived on the scene. Without ceremony, he thrust his way into the room. He savored an unprecedented confidence which even their shouts at his intrusion did not sap.

"I've come to help you," he said, facing Scoyt as the natural leader there. "I've two things for you, and the first is a bit of information. We've discovered that there are trapdoors on every level of every deck; that is only one way the Giants and Outsiders can escape. They also have a handy exit in every single room!"

He jumped up on to the table and demonstrated to them how a grille opened. Climbing down again without comment, he enjoyed the surprised look in their faces.

"That's something else for you to watch, Master Scoyt," he said. And then the point about Fermour's escape that had been troubling him slid into his mind without effort; instantly, a slice more of the puzzle became clear.

"Somewhere in the ship, the Giants have a headquarters," he said. "They took me to it when they caught me, but I don't know where it is—I was gassed. But obviously it's in a part of a deck or level cut off from us, deliberately or by its design. There are many such places in the ship—those're where we have to look."

It certainly sounds worth investigating—— Councilor Rusklin said.

"Suppose you're right, Complain," Scoyt interrupted. "If the grille's blocked, how do we get through?"

"Like this!" Complain leveled the heat gun at the nearest wall, fanning it horizontally. The wall began to drip away. He switched off power when a ragged archway had formed and looked challengingly at them. For a moment all were silent.

"And that's how you use it. It's not a real weapon—it's a flame projector."

Scoyt stood up. His face was flushed.

"Let's get down to Deck 21," he said. "Complain, you've done well. We'll try that gadget out at once."

They moved out in a body, Scoyt leading. He gripped Complain's arm gratefully.

"Given time, we can pull the ship apart with that weapon," he said. It was a remark that did not fully register on Complain until much later.

Chaos reigned on the middle level of Deck 21. All the manholes were exposed, each now guarded by a sentry; their covers were flung aside in untidy piles. The few people who lived here—mostly men of the barriers and their families—were evacuating before further trouble came, straggling among the sentries, getting in everyone's way. Scoyt elbowed his way roughly through them, pushing squeaking children to right and left.

As they flung open Fermour's cell door, Complain felt a hand on his arm. He turned, and there was Vyann, fresh and bright of eye.

"I thought you were asleep!" he exclaimed, smiling with the delight of seeing her again.

"Do you realize it's within a watch of waking?" she said. "Besides, I'm told things are about to happen. I had to come and see that you didn't

died away to nothing.

"That should do it!" Gregg exclaimed with immense satisfaction, climbing down from his perch and eyeing the gaping ruin above him. His beard twitched with excitement

"I really think we ought to hold a full Council meeting before we do anything as drastic as this, Master Scoyt!" Councillor Ruskin said plaintively, surveying the ruin of the cell.

"We've done nothing but hold Council meetings for years," Scoyt said. "Now we're going to act."

He ran into the corridor and bellowed furiously, producing in very short time a dozen armed men and a ladder.

Complain, who felt he had more experience of this kind of thing than the others, brought a bucket of water from the nearby guards' quarters, flinging it up over the tortured metal. In the ensuing cloud of steam, Scoyt thrust the ladder into place and climbed up with his dazer ready. One by one, as quickly as possible, the others followed, Vyann keeping close to Complain. Soon the whole party stood in the strange room above the cell.

It was overwhelmingly hot; the air was hard to breathe. Their flashlights soon picked out the reason for the blocked grille and the collapsed inspectionway below their feet: the floor of this chamber had undergone a terrific denting in some long-past explosion. A machine—perhaps left untended in the time of the Nine Day Ague, Complain thought—had blown up, ruining every article and wall in the place. A staggering quantity of splintered glass and wood was scattered all over the floor. The walls were pitted with shrapnel. But there was not a trace of a Giant.

"Come on!" Scoyt said, trampling ankle deep through the wreckage toward one of two doors. "Let's not waste time here."

The explosion had wedged the door tightly. They melted it with

I'd like to know? We know magnetic locks and octagonal ring locks, but what's an air lock?"

"Never mind what it is. Melt it down!" Hawl repeated, Wagging his grotesque head. "It's your lousy ship, Captain —make yourself at home!"

Gregg turned the heat on. The metal blushed a sad, dull rose, but did not run. Nor did an amount of cursing make any difference, and in the end Gregg put the weapon bewilderedly away.

"Must be special metal," he said.

One of the armed men pushed forward and spun the wheel on one of the doors, whereupon the door slid easily back into a slot in the wall. Someone laughed sharply at the slackening of tension; Gregg had the grace to look abashed. They were free to move into the cargo air lock.

The air lock, although only a medium-sized chamber, had, set in its opposite wall, something none of them had ever seen before, something which to their awed eyes extended the length of the lock to infinity: a window: a window looking into space.

This was not the pinch of space Vyann and Complain had seen in the Control Room; this was a broad square. But their previous experience had prepared them for this in some measure. They were the first to be drawn across the deep dust floor to the glory itself; the others of the party remained rooted in the entrance.

Beyond the window, with stars tossed prodigiously into it like jewels into an emperor's sack, roared the unending stillness of space. It was something beyond comprehension to gaze upon, the mightiest paradox of all, for although it gave an impression of unyielding blackness, every last pocket of it glistened with multicolored pangs of light.

Nobody spoke, swallowing the spectacle as if dumb.

Though all of them were fit to weep before the serenity of space, it

work on the job commenced at once. Volunteers hooked to Scoyt's aid, willing to do anything to help. Human chains worked feverishly, passing back every movable item on the doomed deck to others who smashed it or, if smashing were not possible, flung it into other vacant rooms. Ahead of the chain sweating warriors, many of them Gregg's men experienced in such tasks, attacked the ponics, hacking them down, rooting them up; just behind them came the clearance men, looting and gutting.

As soon as a room was cleared, Master Scoyt himself came with the heat gun, blazing the sides of the walls till the wall came tumbling down; they were carted off as soon as they were cool enough to touch. The heat gun did not melt the metal which divided deck from deck—that metal was the same, evidently, as the metal of which the air-lock doors were built, something extra tough—but everything else fell away before it.

Soon after the work began, a rat hideout was discovered in a big room marked LAUNDRY. Splitting open a boiler, two of Gregg's men revealed a crazy maze of rat buildings, a rodent village. Different levels and nights of a bewildering complexity of design had been constructed inside the boiler from bones and rubble and cans and filth. There were tiny cages here containing starving creatures, mice, hamsters, rabbits, even a bird; there were moths living here, rising up in a storm; and there were the rats, in nurseries and armories and slaughterhouses. As Scoyt thrust the heat gun into the miniature city and it crackled up in flames, the rodents poured out savagely, leaping to the attack.

Scoyt saved himself with the gun, warding them off as he fell back. Gregg's two men had their throats bitten through before reinforcements could dash up with dazers and beat off the little furies. The bodies went back along the human chain, and demolition continued.

By now, the corridors of Decks 24 to 13 had been completely

shouted. That's obvious enough, why make an issue of it?

"You do not understand. We shall die if the ship is pulled apart!"
Councillor Dupont protested.

"It would get rid of the rats, anyway," Hawl said, and cackled with laughter.

Right from the start, he and Gregg were quietly at loggerheads with the members of the council; neither side liked the other's manners. The meeting was disorganized for another reason, nobody could decide whether to discuss the steps Scoyt was taking or the discovery of the strange planet.

At last, Tregonnin himself tried to integrate these two facets of the situation.

"What it amounts to," he said, "is this. Scoyt's policy can be approved if it succeeds. To succeed, not only must the Giants be captured, but, when captured, they must be able to tell us how to get the ship down to the surface of this planet."

There was a general murmur of agreement at this.

"Obviously, the Giants must have such knowledge," Billyoe said, "since they built the ship in the first place."

"Then, let's get on with it, and go and give Scoyt some support,"
Gregg said, standing up.

"There is just one other thing before you go," Tregonnin said. "Our discussion has been on purely material lines. But I think we have also moral justification for our action. The ship is a sacred object for us; we may destroy it only under one condition: that the Long Journey be done. That condition, happily, is fulfilled. I am confident that the planet some of you have seen beyond the ship is Earth."

The pious tone of this speech brought derision from Gregg and some of the Survival Team. It brought applause and excitement from others.

devices throughout most of the ship had a simple way of coping with outbreaks of fire: they closed off the room in which the fire began and exhausted the air from it. Unluckily, this fire was started in a room where the devices had failed, and in the open corridors.

Scoyt and his fellow destroyers worked on in the smoke. An impartial observer, seeing these men, would have known that an inner fury possessed them; that a life-long hatred of the ship which imprisoned them had at last found expression and was working itself out with uncheckable force.

The Giants struck cleverly.

Scoyt had just burned one wall of a small washroom and was resting while three of his men removed the wall, so that it shielded him momentarily from the view of the others. At that instant, the grille overhead was whipped away, and a Giant fired a gas pellet at Scoyt. It caught the Master in the face. He collapsed without a sound.

A cord ladder snaked down from the grille. One of the Giants skipped down it and seized the heat gun from Scoyt's limp grasp. As he did so, the severed wall toppled over on top of him and stunned him: the three handlers had been careless and did not mean to let it go. They stared in utter surprise at the Giant. As they did so, three more Giants dropped down the ladder, fired at them, picked up the other and the heat gun, and attempted to get back to safety.

Despite the smoke, other people had seen this foray. One of Gregg's ablest assassins, a fellow called Black, sprang forward. The hindmost Giant, who had just reached the grille, came crashing down again with a knife stuck in his back; the heat gun rolled from his grasp. Shouting for assistance, Black retrieved his knife and bounded up the ladder. He, too, fell back to the floor with a face full of gas. Others were behind him.

follow me back to Deck 20. If we get down the inspection hatches there, we can take the Giants from the rear."

It was an excellent idea. The only drawback—and it explained how the Giants still managed to move unseen from deck to deck, despite the removal of all trapdoors—was that the inspectionways extended around the circumference of the ship, just inside the hull, thus surrounding the rooms of all upper levels. Until this was realized, the Giants' movements could never be blocked. The ship was more complex than Gregg had bargained for. His men, streaming wildly down the trapdoors, could not find the enemy.

Gregg did as his wild nature dictated. He blazed a way ahead with the heat gun, turning molten every obstacle in his path.

Never before had the inspectionways been open to the inhabitants of the ship; never before had a madly brandished welder played among all those delicate capillaries of the vessel.

Within three minutes of switching on power, Gregg ruptured a sewer sluice and a main water pipe. The water jetted out and knocked a crawling man flat, playing wildly over him, drowning him, streaming and cascading over everything, seething between the metal sandwich of decks.

"Switch that thing off, you fool!" one of the Forwards men, sensing danger, yelled at Gregg.

For answer, Gregg turned the heat on him.

A power cable went next. Sizzling, rearing like a cobra, live wire flashed across the rails the inspection trucks ran on; two men died instantly.

The gravity blew. Over that entire deck, free fall suddenly snapped into being. The stampede which followed in that constricted area only made matters worse. Gregg himself, though he had had experience of

corridor, there had been so much shouting that a little more went unremarked until, the door suddenly crashing open, Councillor Tregonnin entered.

"Mutiny!" he said. "Mutiny! I feared as much. Oh Hem, what will happen to us all? I said from the start that those Deadways ruffians should never have been allowed in here. Can't you rouse Scoyt? He'd know what to do! I'm not *supposed* to be a man of action."

"Keep working on Master Scoyt, Councillor," Complain told Tregonnin. "He'll soon be lively enough to solve all your problems for you. We'll be back."

He hustled a surprised Vyann out into the corridor. A thin dribble of water crept along the deck, dripping into the manholes.

"Now what?" she asked him.

"I was a fool not to think of this before," he said. "We've got to risk pulling the place down around our heads to get to the Giants—unless there is another way. And there *is* another way. Zac Deight has an instrument in his room by which he spoke to Curtis, the Giants' leader."

"Don't you remember, Roy; Marapper said Zac Deight had gone?" she said.

"We may be able to find the way to work the instrument without him," Complain replied. "Or we may find something else there that will be useful to us. We are doing no good here, that's sure."

He spoke as six Forwards men, pelting silently along, brushed past him. Everyone seemed to be on the run, splashing down the corridors; no doubt the spiked stench of burning hustled them on. Taking Vyann's soft hand, Complain led her rapidly along to Deck 17 and down to the lower level. The trapdoor covers lay about like discarded gravestones, but already the guards over them had deserted their posts to seek excitement

his tone. And I've so far elicited one thing from him, with the help of a knife under his fingernails. The Outsiders and Giants come from the planet you saw outside; but they can't get back there till a ship comes up to get them. This ship can't go down there."

"Of course it can't, it's out of control," Vyann said. "Priest Marapper, you are wasting your time. I also cannot allow you to torture this Councillor, whom I have known since I was a girl."

"Don't forget he was going to kill us!" Complain reminded her. She made no answer beyond looking stubbornly at him, knowing, woman-like, that she had an argument superior to reason.

"I had no alternative but to try and remove you both," Zac Deight said huskily. "If you will save me from this horrible creature I will do anything—within reason."

They were interrupted by a noise nearby, a curious noise, a scraping rustle, frightening because it was unidentifiable. It grew louder. Suddenly, it was overhead.

Rats were on the move! They drummed along the air duct; across the grille Complain had recently climbed through pattering pink feet came and went, as the tribe thundered by. Dust showered down into the room, and with the dust came smoke.

"That sort of thing'll be happening all over the ship," Complain told Zac Deight gravely, when the stampede had gone by. "The fire is driving the rats out of their holes. Given time, the men will gut the place absolutely. They'll find your secret hideout in the end, if they kill us all doing it. If you know what's good for you, Deight, you'll get on that instrument and tell Curtis to come out with his hands up."

"If I did, they would never obey," Zac Deight said. His hands, paper-thin, rustled together on his lap.

I'm not reasonable!" Complain shouted. "I'm anything but reasonable! Get on to Curtis! Go on, you old fox, move! Get a ship up here!"

"Inspector Vyann, can't you—" Zac Deight said.

"Yes, Roy, please..." Vyann began.

"No!" Complain roared. "These beggars are responsible for all our miseries. Now they're going to get us out of trouble or else."

Seizing one end of the bookcase, he pulled it angrily away from the wall. The phone stood there on its niche, neutral and silent, ready to convey any message spoken into it.

"This time my dazer's at Lethal, Deight," Complain said. "You have the count of three to begin talking. *One . . . two . . .*" Tears stood in Zac Deight's eyes as he lifted the receiver. It shook in his grasp.

"Get me Crane Curtis, will you?" he said, when a voice spoke at the other end. Possessed as he was, Complain could not restrain a thrill shooting through him, to think that this instrument was now connected with the secret stronghold in the ship.

When Curtis came on, all four in the room could hear his voice distinctly. It was pitched high with anxiety; he talked so rapidly he hardly sounded like a Giant. He began speaking at once, before the old councillor could get a word in.

"Deight? You've slipped up somewhere," he said. "I always said you were too old for this job! The damned dizzies have got that welder in action. I thought you told me *you* had it? They're running amok with it—absolutely berserk. Some of the boys tried to get it back but failed, and now the ship's on fire near us. This is your doing! You're going to take the responsibility for this . . ."

During this flow of words, Zac Deight subtly changed, slipping back into something like his old dignity. The receiver steadied in his hand.

Then answer. Do you think I'm talking for fun? Curtis snapped.
"There's just one chance for us all. Up in the personnel hatch on Deck 10, there's an emergency transmitter. Got that? We're all bottled up here. We can't get out. *You're* out. You've got to get to that transmitter and radio Little Dog for help. Can you do that?"

The dazer was eager at Zac Deight's ribs now.

"I'll try," he said.

"You'd better try! It's our only hope. And, Deight . . ."

"Yes?"

"For God's sake tell 'em to come armed—and quick."

"All right."

"And hurry, man. For heaven's sake hurry."

A long, meaningful silence followed Zac Deight's switching off.

"Are you going to let me get to that radio?" Deight asked.

Complain nodded.

"I'm coming with you," he said. "We've got to get a ship to us." He turned to Vyann. She had brought the old councillor a beaker of water which he accepted gratefully.

"Laur," Complain said, "will you please go back and tell Roger Scoyt, who should be revived by now, that the Giants' hideout is somewhere on the upper level of Deck 20. Tell him to wipe them all out as soon as possible. Tell him to go carefully: there's danger of some sort there. Tell him— tell him there's one particular Giant called Curtis who ought to be launched very *slowly* on the Long Journey. Take care of yourself, Laur, I'll be back as soon as I can."

Vyann said, "Couldn't Marapper go instead of—"

"I'd like the message to arrive straight," Complain said bluntly.

"Do be careful," she begged him.

lever from one end of the ship to the other. No truck was there. They crawled along the track, through the narrow opening in the interdeck metal which, even here, stood between one deck and another, and on into a third deck until they found a truck. Under Zac Deight's direction, they climbed on to its platform and lay flat.

With a touch at the controls, they were off, gathering speed quickly. The deck intersections flicked by only a few inches above their heads. Marapper groaned as he attempted to draw in his stomach, but in a short time they slowed, arriving at Deck 10. The councillor stopped the truck and they got off again.

In this far end of the ship, evidence of rats abounded. Marapper kept his light constantly swinging from side to side.

Having stopped the truck just inside the deck, they could stand up. Above and around them, four feet wide, the inspectionways here became a washer between two wheels of deck, its width crossed by a veritable entanglement of girders, braces, pipes, and ducts, and by the immense tubes which carried the ship's corridors. A steel ladder ran up into the darkness over their heads.

"The personnel lock, of course, is on the upper level," Zac Deight said. Taking hold of the rungs of the ladder, he began to climb.

As he followed, Complain noted many signs of damage on either side of them, as if, in the rooms between which they now ascended, ancient detonations had occurred. Even as he thought the thought-picture "detonation," a bellow of sound vibrated through the inspectionways, setting up resonances and groans in a variety of pipes until the place sang like an orchestra.

"Your people are still wrecking the ship," Zac Deight said coldly.

"Let's hope they kill off a few squadrons of Giants at the same

I just hope none got away," he said. "I'll swear those things act as scouts for the rats."

The damage in this region was as bad as any Complain and Marapper had seen so far. Hardly a wall stood straight in any direction. Glass and debris lay everywhere, except where brushed away to make a narrow path. Down this path they walked, every sense alert.

"What *was* this place?" Complain asked curiously. "I mean, when it was a place."

Zac Deight continued to walk forward without replying, his face bleak and absorbed.

"What was this place, Deight?" Complain repeated.

"Oh. . . . Most of the deck was Medical Research," Deight said, in a preoccupied fashion. "In the end, I believe, a neglected computer blew itself to bits. You can't reach this part by the ordinary elevators and corridors of the ship; it's completely sealed off. A tomb within a tomb."

Complain felt a thrill inside him. Medical Research! This was where, twenty-three generations ago, June Payne, the discoverer of paynine, had worked. He tried to visualize her bent over a bench, but could only think of Laur.

So they came to the personnel air lock. It looked much like a smaller edition of the cargo lock, with similar-looking wheels and danger notices. Zac Deight crossed to one of the wheels, still with his abstracted look.

"Wait!" Marapper said urgently. "Roy, as guile's my guide, I swear this wretch has something tricky up his stinking sleeves for us. He's leading us into danger."

"If there's anyone waiting in here, Deight," Complain said, "they and you make the Journey without delay. I'm warning you."

Deight turned to face them. The look of unbearable strain clenched

Like the cargo lock, this lock had a window. The four personnel and two cargo locks distributed down the length of the ship carried, apart from the now-shuttered blister of the Control Room, the only ports in the ship. Having a different coefficient of expansion from the rest of the great outer envelope, they naturally represented a weakness, and as such had been constructed only where it might be strictly necessary to see out. For Marapper, it was the first time he had had such a view.

He was as overwhelmed with awe as the others had been. Breathlessly he gazed out at the mighty void, for once completely robbed of words.

The planet now showed a wider crescent than the last time Complain had seen it. Mixed with the blinding blue of it were whites and greens, glistening under its casing of atmosphere as no colors had ever glistened before. Some distance from this compelling crescent, tiny by comparison, the sun burned brighter than life itself.

Marapper pointed at it in fascination.

"What's that? A sun?" he asked.

Comnlain nodded.

Zac Deight had gone over to the radio. As he picked it up, trembling, he turned to the others.

"You may as well know now," he said. "Whatever happens. I may as well tell you. That planet—it's Earth!"

"What?" Complain said. A rush of questions assailed him. "You're lying, Deight! You must be. It can't be Earth! We know it can't be Earth!"

The old man was suddenly weeping, the long salt tears raining down his cheeks. He hardly tried to check them.

"You ought to be told," he said. "You've all suffered so much . . . too much. That's Earth out there—but you can't go to it. The Long Journey ... the Long Journey has got to go on forever."

only one who can work this radio thing! Make him speak, Roy. You can kill him and ask questions after."

Gradually the words filtered into Complain's comprehension. The blinding anger and frustration ebbed like a crimson tide from his mind. Marapper, as always canny where his own safety was concerned, had spoken wisely. With an effort, Complain gained control of himself again. He stood up and dragged Deight roughly to his feet.

"What is Little Dog?" he asked.

"It's . . . it's the code name for an institute on the planet, set up to study the inmates of this ship," Zac Deight said, rubbing his throat.

"To study! . . . Well, get them quick and say—say some of your men are ill and they've got to send a ship. And don't say anything else or we'll tear you apart and feed you to the rats. Go on!"

"Ah!" Marapper rubbed his hands in appreciation and gave his cloak a tug down at the back. "That's spoken like a true believer, Roy. You're my favorite sinner. And when the ship gets here, we overpower the crew and go back to Earth in it. Everyone goes! *Everyone!* Every man, woman, and mutant from here to Sternstairs!"

Zac Deight cradled the set in his arms, switching on power. Then, braving their anger, he mustered his courage and turned to face them.

"Let me just say this to you both," he said with dignity. "Whatever happens—and I greatly fear the outcome of all this terrible affair—I'd like you to remember what I am telling you. You feel cheated, rightly. Your lives are enclosed in suffering by the walls of this ship. But wherever you lived, in whatsoever place or time, your lives would not be free of pain. For everyone in the universe, life is a long, hard journey. If you—"

"That'll do, Deight," Complain said. "We're not asking for paradise: we're demanding to choose where we suffer. Start talking to Little

bunkhead. Then with characteristic change of mood, he fell on his knees before Zac Deight's body, in the first gesture of prostration, and began the last obsequies over it.

Fists clenched, Complain stared numbly out at the planet. He could not join the priest. The compulsion to perform ritual gestures over the dead had left him; he seemed to have grown beyond superstition. But what transfixed him was a realization which evidently had not occurred to Marapper, a realization which canceled all their hopes.

After a thousand delays, they had found Earth was near. Earth was their true home. And Earth, on Zac Deight's admission, had been taken over by Giants and Outsiders. It was against that revelation Complain had burned his anger in vain.

Laur Vyann stood silent and helpless, watching the furious activity on Deck 20. She managed to stand by wedging herself in a broken doorway: the gravity lines on this deck had been severed in the assaults. Directions in the three concentric levels had gone crazy; ups and downs existed that had never existed before, and for the first time Vyann realized just how ingeniously the engineers who designed the ship had worked. Half the deck, under these conditions, would be impossible to live in: the rooms were built on the ceilings.

Near Vyann, equally silent, were a cluster of Forwards women, some of them clutching children. They watched, many of them, the destruction of their homes.

Scoyt, clad only in a pair of shorts, had fully recovered from his gassing and was now dismantling the entire deck, as earlier he had begun to dismantle Deck 25. On receiving Complain's message from Vyann, he had flung himself into the work with a ferocity terrible to watch.

His first move had been to have executed without further ado the

the water was the strangest. Although its momentum carried it forward, bursting out into nongravity, it showed an inclination to go nowhere and form into globules. But the conflagration started on Decks 23 and 24 was now an inferno, which set up on either side of it waves of air within whose eddies the globules whirled and elongated like crazy glass fish.

"I think we got 'em Giants cornered!" Hawl shouted. With practiced aim he sliced down one more partition. Shouts of excitement went up from the men around him.

Vyann could not stay watching Scoyt. The lines on his face, rendered terrible by firelight, had not softened under the breakdown of gravity. They looked now deeper than ever; for Scoyt, this dissection of the body in which he lived was a traumatic experience. This was what his relentless pursuit of a foe had crumbled to, and in the frenzied Hawl it found external incarnation.

Profoundly saddened, the girl turned away. She glanced about for Tregonnin; he was nowhere to be seen. Perhaps he was fluttering alone in his apartments, a little man who knew truth without being able to convey it. She had to go to Roy Complain; the way she felt at the moment, only his face still wore the mask of humanity. Amid the clamor of demolition, she saw why she loved Complain; it was because (and this was something both were aware of, though neither spoke of it) Complain had changed, Vyann being both a witness of and a factor in the change. In this hour, many people—Scoyt for one—were changing, sloughing off the ancient molds of repression even as had Complain; but whereas they were changing into lower beings, Roy Complain's metamorphosis lifted him to a higher sphere.

Decks 19 and 18 were packed with people, all ominously waiting for a climax they could but dimly sense. Beyond them, Vyann found the upper levels deserted as she made her way forward. Although the dark sleep-

themselves with. Now, for the first time, Vyann realized it could destroy them utterly—and nobody was doing a thing about it. It was spreading between levels, like a cancerous finger; when they realized its danger, it would be too late. She walked more rapidly, gnawing her lower lip, feeling the deck hot beneath her feet.

Suddenly, the crippled rat, not two yards ahead of her, coughed and lay still.

"Vyann!" a voice said behind her. She wheeled like a startled deer.

Gregg stood there, putting away his dazer. Following her silently down the corridor, he had been unable to resist killing the rat. With his head swathed in bandages, he was hardly recognizable; the remnant of his left arm was also bandaged and strapped across his shirt. In the dark, he did not make a companionable figure. Vyann could not repress a shiver of fright at the stealth of his appearance. If she, for any reason, should wish to cry for help, nobody would hear her in this lost corner of the ship.

He came up and touched her arm. She could see his lips among the swathes of bandage.

"I want to come with you," he said. "I followed you through the crowd—I was no use back there like this."

"Why did you follow me?" she asked, withdrawing her arm.

She thought he smiled beneath his lint visor.

"Something's gone wrong," he said, very quietly. When he saw she did not understand, he added, "In the ship, I mean. We're finished now. You can feel it down in your bones . . . Let me come with you, Laur; you're so ... Oh, come on, it's getting hot."

She moved ahead without speaking. For some reason, her eyes stung with tears; they were, after all, all in the same boat.

While Marapper was making his prostrations over the burned-out

I can't wait to hear," Complain said grimly. "But you're coming straight back to the Council to tell *them*: I find it dangerous to be the only one who receives these confidences."

"Not back into the ship, Roy, please, I beg you. I've had enough of it all. I can't face it again."

"Get up!" Complain said. Seizing Fermour by the wrist, he swung him up and pushed him into the air lock. Then he kicked Marapper gently in his ample buttocks.

"You ought to have grown out of that mumbo-jumbo, priest," he said. "Besides, we've no time to waste. We shall have to get Scoyt and Gregg and everyone here to this deck for a mass attack when the Giants arrive. Our only hope, that I can see, is to seize their ship when it comes."

Red-faced, the priest rose, dusting off his knees. He maneuvered so that Complain stood between him and Fermour, avoiding the latter as if he had been a ghost.

"I suppose you're right," he said to Complain. "Although as a man of peace, I greatly regret all this bloodshed. We must pray to Consciousness that the blood may be theirs, rather than ours."

Leaving the old councillor to lie where he had fallen, they prodded Fermour out of the lock and back toward the trapdoor in the littered corridor. As they went, a strange noise haunted their ears. At the trap, halting in apprehension, they found the origin of the sound. Beneath their feet, swarming along the inspectionway, was a host of rats. Some of them glanced pinkly up at Marapper's light; none faltered in their rapid advance toward the bow of the ship. Brown rats, small rats, gray rats, tawny rats, hurried to the pipe of fear.

"We can't get down there!" Complain said. His stomach twisted at the idea.

Vyann and Gregg. The girl threw herself into Complain's arms.

Hurriedly, he gave her his news. She told him of the devastation being wrought on the twenties decks. Even as she spoke, the lights around them glowed suddenly to great brilliance, then died, even the pilot lights fading out completely. At the same time, the gravity blew; they sprawled uncomfortably in mid-air.

A groan rattled down the confines of the ship. For the very first time, they perceived the vessel to give a lurch.

"The ship's doomed!" Fermour shouted. "Those fools are destroying it! You've got nothing to fear from the Giants now—by the time they get here, they'll be a rescue party, picking bodies out of a wreck."

"The human predicament apart," Marapper said, "nothing is hopeless. As I see it, we'd be safest in the Control Room. If I can only control my feet, that's where I'm going."

"Good idea, priest," Gregg said. "I've had enough of burning. It would be the safest place for Vyann, too."

"The Control Room!" Fermour said. "Yes, of course . . ."

Complain said nothing, silently abandoning his plan to take Fermour before the Council; the hour was too late. Nor did there seem, in the circumstances, any hope of repelling the Giants.

Clumsily, with agonizing slowness, the party covered the nine decks which lay between them and the blister housing the ruined controls. At last they hauled themselves up the spiral stairs and through the hole Vyann and Complain had made earlier.

"That's funny," Marapper said. "Five of us started out from Quarters to reach this place: finally, three of us have done it together!"

"Much good may it do us," Complain said. "I never knew why I followed you, priest."

emotion that it sounded flat.

"It's not my doing," Fermour said hastily, scenting trouble. "It's just that this situation is too formidable for any of you. The ship was the edict of the World Government which set up the Little Dog authority to control this ship."

Complain's gesture was angry, but Vyann's was supplicatory.

"Why?" she said. "Why must the ship stay here? It's so cruel . . . We are Earth people. This terrible double journey to Procyon and back—it's been made, and somehow it now seems we've survived it. Shouldn't—oh, I don't know what happens on Earth, but shouldn't people have been glad to have us back, happy, excited . . . ?"

"When this ship, 'Big Dog'—so christened in jocular allusion to the constellation Little Dog for which it set out— was detected in Earth's telescopes, finally returning from its long journey, everyone on Earth was, as you say—happy, excited, marveling." Fermour paused. This event had taken place before he was born, but the epic had often been retold to him. "Signals were sent out to the ship," he continued; "they were never answered. Yet the ship kept speeding on toward Earth. It seemed inexplicable. We have passed the technological phase of our civilization, but nevertheless factories were speedily built and a fleet of little ships launched toward 'Big Dog.' They had to find out what was happening aboard.

"They matched velocities with this giant vessel, they boarded her. They found—well, they found out about everything; they found that a new Dark Ages had settled over the whole ship, as the result of an ancient catastrophe."

"The Nine Day Ague!" Vyann breathed.

Fermour nodded, surprised she should know.

You're trying to scare us," Gregg said, his eyes glittering amid the wrappings of his face.

"I'm not," Fermour said. "Instead of a life expectation for an average human of eighty years, yours is only twenty. The factor does not spread itself evenly over your life: you tend to grow more quickly as children, have a fairly normal adulthood, and then crumble suddenly in old age."

"We'd have noticed if this scoundrel scheme were so!" Marapper howled.

"No," Fermour said. "You wouldn't. Though the signs were all around you, you could not see them, because you have no standards of comparison. For instance, you accepted the fact that one sleep-wake in four was dark. Living at four times the normal rate, naturally four of your days or sleep-wakes only made one ordinary one. When the ship was a going concern—on the voyage out to Procyon—the lights automatically dimmed all over the vessel from midnight to six, partly to give a friendly illusion of night, partly to allow the servicers to work behind the scenes, making any necessary repairs. That brief six-hour shift is a whole day to you."

Now the comprehension was growing on them. It seemed, oddly enough, to soak from the inside to the outside, as if, in some mystical way, the truth had been trapped in them all along. The awful pleasure of making them know the worst—they who had tortured him—filled Fermour. He went on, suddenly keen to make them see how damned they were.

"That's why Earthmen call you 'dizzies'; you live so fast, it makes us dizzy. But that isn't all that is wrong! Imagine this great ship, still automatically functioning despite the lack of anyone to control it. It supplied everything: except the things which, by its nature, it could not supply, fresh vitamins, fresh air, fresh sunlight. Each of your succeeding generations becomes smaller; Nature survives how she may, and that

It's a dead end. They'll swallow us! We'll be torn to pieces!

Now he had the casing off, tearing it away with his hands, flinging it behind him. Beneath it, severed from their toggles, lay eighty-four double strands of wire. Using the side of his saw, Fermour frantically bashed the pairs together. Sparks flew and—the terrible sound of the rodent army cut off abruptly. Every deck was closed from its neighbor; all the interdeck doors, on every level, had clicked firmly shut, tombing off further communication.

Gasping, Fermour rocked back against the paneling. He had worked the trick just in time. The thought of the horrible death he had so narrowly avoided overcame him, and he was sick on the floor.

"Look at him, Roy!" Gregg shouted, pointing his sound hand in scorn. "You were wrong about us, Roy! We're as good as he is, or better. He's scared green . . ."

He advanced to Fermour, clenching his one good fist; Marapper followed, dragging out a knife.

"Someone's got to be sacrificed for all this deadly wrong," the priest said, through clenched teeth, "and it's going to be *you*, Fermour—you're going to make the Long Journey on behalf of twenty-three generations of suffering! It would be a *nice* gesture."

Dropping the saw helplessly, Fermour stood there without defense. He did not move or speak; it was almost as if he saw the priest's point of view. Marapper and Gregg came on. Complain and Vyann stood unmoving behind them.

As Marapper's blade came up, an unexpected clangor filled the dome beneath which they were grouped. Mysteriously, the shutters, closed since the days of Captain Gregory Complain, sprang back to reveal the long windows. Three quarters of a great sphere all around the five of them

others before you have found out vital secrets, but we've always managed to silence them in time. Now . . . well, you might be all right on Earth: we have taken some of your babies down there, and they've survived, but we've always—"

"We!" Vyann exclaimed. "You keep saying 'we'! But you are an Outsider, an ally of the Giants. What relation are you to true Earthmen?"

Fermour laughed without humor.

"Outsiders and Giants are true Earthmen," he said. "When Big Dog was towed into orbit, we—Earth—fully realized our grave responsibility to you all. Doctors and teachers were your especial need. Holy men were required, to counter the irreligion of the Teaching—which, vile though it was, undoubtedly assisted your survival in some measure. But there were snags: people could not just creep into the air locks and mingle with you, easy though that was, with the inspectionway system and the hydroponic tangles to shelter them. They had to be trained at Little Dog Institute to move and speak as quickly as possible, to sleep in cat naps, to—oh, in short to act like dizzies. And to bear the horrible stench in the ship. And, of course, they had to be abnormally small men, since none of you is above five feet high.

"Some of these men, performing a dangerous mission, you knew and liked. Lindsey and Meller, the artist, were both Earthmen stationed in Quarters—Outsiders, but your friends."

". . . and you," Complain said. He made a sweeping gesture before his face; a moth circled there, eluding his hand.

"I'm an anthropologist," Fermour said, "although I also tried to help spread the light. There are several of us aboard. This is a unique chance to discover the effects of a closed environment on man; it has taught us more about man and

maintenance crew who came aboard when the ship was in orbit and began, secretly, to make the place more suitable for you to live in. They sealed off these controls, in case anybody finding them should start wondering about things; for although we always tried to foster in you the knowledge that you are in a ship—in case a day ever came when you might be able to leave it—the maintenance crews were always careful to destroy any direct evidence which might, by inducing you to investigate on your own account, make their job more dangerous.

"The rings we and what you call the 'Giants' wear are replicas of the same ring-key the original maintenance crews wore when the ship was a going concern. They, and the inspectionways to which they give access, have made life aboard with you possible. It means we can have—and occasionally slip away to—a secret H.Q. on the ship, with food and baths,"

"So you were all just taking care of us! You didn't any of you want to scare us, eh?" Gregg asked.

"Of course not," Fermour replied. "Our orders are strictly not to kill a dizzy; none of us ever carries a lethal weapon. The legend that Outsiders were spontaneously generated in the muck of the ponics was purely a dizzy superstition. We did nothing to alarm, everything to help."

Gregg laughed curtly.

"I see," he said. "Just a bunch of wet nurses for us poor dolts, eh? It never occurred to you that while you studied us we might be going through hell? Look at me! Look at my mate Hawl! Look at half the poor devils I had under me! And look at the ones so deformed we put 'em out of their misery when we came across them in Deadways! Let's see, seven off twenty-three . . . Yes, you let sixteen generations live and die here, as near as this to earth, suffering the tortures we suffered, and you think you deserve a medal for it! Give me that knife, Marapper."

pulled out his dazer and downed them as they emerged. High voltage crackled behind the panels, where other hordes of moths jammed naked connections, causing short circuits.

"Can they do any real damage?" Vyann asked Complain.

He shook his head uneasily, to show he did not know, fighting away the feeling of having a skull stuffed with muslin.

"Here comes the ship!" Fermour said, pointing into the gleaming dark. Tiny beside the bulk of the mother planet, a chip of light seemed hardly to move toward them.

Head swimming, Vyann stared out at the bulk of their own ship, Big Dog. Here, in this blister, they had a splendid view over its arching back. On impulse, she kicked herself up to the top of the dome where the outlook was still clearer; Complain swam up alongside, and they clung to one of the narrow tubes into which the shutters had rolled themselves.

Vyann stared longingly out. The sight of the planet was like a toothache; she had to look away.

"To think they'll come all the way up here from Earth and lock us back away from the sun" she said.

"They won't—they can't." Complain said. "Fermour's only a fool: he doesn't know. When these others come, Laur, they'll understand we've earned freedom, a right to try life on Earth. Obviously they're not cruel or they'd never have taken so much trouble over us. They'll see we'd rather die there than live here."

A startling explosion came from below them. Shards of metal paneling blew out into the room, mingling with dead moths and smoke. Vyann and Complain looked down to see Gregg and Fermour floating away to a far corner, away from danger; the priest followed them more slowly—his cloak had been blown over his head. Another explosion sounded,

pathway. And each coin was a deck, and each deck was now a world of its own, and each deck, with its random burden of men, animals, or ponics sailed away serenely around Earth, buoyant as a cork in a fathomless sea.

"Now they'll have no alternative but to take us back to Earth," Vyann said in a tiny voice. She looked at Complain; she tried, woman-like, to guess at all the new interests that awaited them. She tried to guess at the exquisite pressures which would attend the adjustment of every ship-dweller to the sublimities of Earth. It was as if everyone was about to be born, she thought, smiling into Complain's awakened face. He was her sort; neither of them had ever been really sure of what it was they wanted: so they, after all, had been the ones most likely to find it.